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March 11, 1890.

No. 659.

\$2.50
 a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.
 No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
 5 Cents.

Vol. XXVI.



THE MAN WHO AROSE WAS—CIBUTA JOHN! AND MOONLIGHT MORGAN AT LAST
 WAS IN HIS GRIP.

OR, Cibuta John's Champion Chase.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
 AUTHOR OF "CIBUTA JOHN, THE PRICKLY PEAR
 FROM CACTUS PLAIN," "THE GIANT
 CUPID," "FIGHTING HARRY,"
 "DISCO DAN," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A DARING ESCAPE.

"NOTICE!"

"This is to whom it may concern—to all me, near
 and far:—Know ye that Dan'l Derrick is P. M. at
 Ante-Bar; that once again he holds the reins by the
 grace of the President of the U. S.; that now he'll
 tune his lyre and chant in rhymes beyond compari-
 son. Respectfully, DANIEL DERRICK, P. M."

Such was the unique notice which the citizens

N.Y. Sat. Jan. 27. 1921.

of Ante-Bar found posted up on the door of their post-office one morning.

The hour was early, and the notice was a surprise to many.

"Uncle" Dan Derrick had been postmaster at Ante-Bar ever since the town had risen to post-office dignity, but a change in Federal administration had finally dethroned him.

When the former administration was restored, however, then the friends of "the Poet o' Ante-Bar" rallied around him and respectfully demanded that "Uncle Dan" be returned to his old post.

Several months dragged by, and as there was no response from "Uncle Sam" in that time, the post's friends forwarded another copy of their petition.

Still there was no answer.

Now it began to look a little strange, to say the least, and some of the prominent citizens of the town wrote to headquarters to learn what was the cause of the delay.

To those letters there came no reply.

The man who was holding the office, in the mean time, was seemingly as anxious as anybody to know what was going to be done. He did not want to keep another man out, he declared, but of course he could not turn the office over to any one without some authority for doing so.

This man's name was Morgan Underweed. He had come to Ante-Bar as something of a gambler sport, though rather out of luck; had soon made quite a "stake," and opened a saloon; took an active part in local politics, and, as a reward, through his friends, secured the appointment to the office of postmaster.

When no answers were received to any of the private letters which had been forwarded by different citizens, suspicions that all was not right were aroused, and steps were taken to find out what was loose.

Foremost among Uncle Dan's backers was John Jones, "Cibuta" John, formerly alcalde of the town, but now a freeholder and sheriff of the county.

He wrote again to the proper officer at Washington, sending two copies of the letter from two different post-offices, requesting that the reply be sent to yet a third office which he named.

In his letter he stated the case briefly but clearly, told of his suspicion, and respectfully asked for some explanation.

The answer was received promptly. His suspicions were confirmed. Uncle Dan had been appointed months before; all the letters had been answered; others had been sent demanding a return of the new postmaster's bond.

It now seemed a clear case, and suspicion against Underweed was strong. It looked as though he had detained the commission and other letters relating to the matter.

Both parties were wondering what was the cause of the delay in action, for the one expected to give the office up just as much as the other expected to acquire it; so on this morning of which we write, when the early risers found the above-quoted notice on the post-office door, it was, as stated, a surprise to many.

"Uncle Dan must 'a' got his dokkymint at last," observed one of the first discoverers of the notice.

"It is about time he did," returned another, "fer it has been a good while a-comin'."

"It had begun ter look as though it wa'n't comin' at all," remarked a third.

"It must 'a' come last night, I reckon," put in a fourth; "but I was here when ther mail kem, an' I didn't see Uncle Dan git anything."

"Mebby he's got it some other way," suggested another. "I see'd thar was some strangers at ther hotel last night; mebbe it has come by messenger."

"Just as like as not; an' mebbe he's come all th' way afoot, which would account for th' long time it has taken him ter git here."

"I wouldn't doubt but that's it," agreed the first speaker. "But," he added, "heer comes Uncle Dan himself, so we'll soon know all about it."

True enough, the old "Poet o' Ante-Bar," was approaching, a smile upon his face and his step light and brisk.

"Hello, Uncle Dan," he was greeted when he came up; "what means this notice heer?"

The old man smiled still more broadly, said a good-morning to all, and responded:

"That notice, boys, as you can see, has 'special reference to me; it tells you all that I'm once more postmaster here, as I was before."

"Bully fer you!" cried all who voted the same ticket; "when did ye git yer dokkymint?"

"It came by messenger last night," was the answer, "and everything is straight and right."

"Good enough, Uncle Dan; that's ther talk!"

"That's what we like ter hear! It took some time ter git thar, but we have got thar jest th' same."

"Let's give three cheers an' a big tiger, boys."

This was agreed to, and a score of voices gave vent to a rousing cheer and a full-grown "tiger."

This unusual noise at such an early hour soon had the town astir, and in a short time there was quite a crowd in front of the post-office, several strangers among the rest.

When it came time for the office to be opened, the crowd was great. Cibuta John, the acknowledged chief citizen of the town, and nearly all the other prominent men of the place, were there.

Questions were asked thick and fast, but little information was given, all being told to wait and see what they would see.

They waited, but it was some time before they saw anything. The time for opening passed, and Underweed did not put in an appearance. Where could he be?

Suspicious began to be voiced, and more than one man present guessed the truth of the situation.

Finally two horsemen came dashing down into the valley, and drew rein in front of the post-office.

One of the men was a stranger, and the other was Postmaster Underweed, a prisoner.

One of the strangers was first to speak.

"You got him, did you, Samuels?" he observed, stepping forward.

"Yes," was the answer, "I bagged him when I found that he meant to run away."

"I expected he would try that game, if he got wind of our presence here," was the comment; and then turning to the crowd the first speaker said:

"Citizens of Ante-Bar, I am a post-office inspector, and this man is my assistant. We have been sent here to settle this trouble over your post-office. Your fellow-citizen, Mr. Derrick, was appointed to the office several months ago. His papers were mailed to him, but it is pretty clear that this man detained them, if not destroyed them. I shall search the office and make sure of that. Mr. Derrick is now your postmaster, he having been duly sworn in last night."

This brief speech brought out many hisses and groans, all of which were directed at Underweed.

"It is all a lie!" the ex-postmaster cried. "It is all a plot to ruin me! I will make you prove it, or you shall suffer for this outrage."

"I guess we have got you dead to rights," observed the inspector's assistant. "I was looking out for you, and when you got up and saw the crowd here in front of the office, you just slid out the back way, saddled your horse and dusted out for the hills. What did you do that for?"

"It is none of your business where I was going or what I was going for," was the retort. "I believe this is a free country, and a man may do as he pleases."

"We won't stop to argue the point," said the inspector; "just hand over your keys, if you please, and I will take a look at things."

"I won't give up the keys until you show your authority," was the defiant retort. "How do I know who you are?"

The inspector displayed his badge and produced his credentials.

"It is my duty to satisfy you on that point," he observed; "and now, sir, I demand the keys of this office."

"I will give you all the keys that belong to the office proper," said the prisoner, "but not the keys to my private drawers and boxes. You have no business to meddle with them."

"I shall make a thorough search of the office," was the retort, "and I demand all the keys you have. I can distinguish private property from that which belongs to the office, sir, and nothing of yours shall be disturbed."

"I won't allow it!" Underweed cried. "Fellow-citizens, must I submit to this indignity? Will you permit it?"

"You had better quietly submit," advised Cibuta John. "The gentleman has full authority to make the search, and you can rest assured that he will not disturb any of your personal property."

"I believe this is some of your work!" Underweed cried, turning fiercely upon him.

"I admit that I have had a hand in it, sir,"

Cibuta coolly acknowledged. "I had nothing to do with your arrest, however."

"He would not have been arrested," said the inspector, "if he had not tried to run away."

"I tell you I was not running away!" the prisoner fired back. "I could explain where I was going, but I won't."

"Well, pass over those keys," the inspector again demanded. "I must search the office, and if I find nothing to support the suspicion against you, of course I shall have to let you go. If you are innocent, you can have no objection to this plan."

"Here they are, then; take them," growled Underweed, and, taking the keys from his pocket, he tossed them to the inspector over the heads of the crowd.

"There, now you are acting more sensibly," continued the inspector. "If you had done this in the first place it would have saved all the parley; but you have saved me the trouble of taking them from you. Now, Mr. Sheriff," turning to Cibuta, "just select half a dozen of your fellow-citizens as witnesses, and we will go in."

Cibuta quickly named the men, five of the six being his opponents politically, and backers of Underweed; and the inspector opened the door of the office and they went in.

The inspector closed the door, and the crowd pressed around more closely to learn the result at the earliest possible moment.

All attention was toward the office, and little was being bestowed upon the prisoner. He was considered safe, if any thought was given to him at all. Suddenly, though, a pistol-shot startled everybody, and the crowd, turning as one man, saw the inspector's assistant reel and fall from his saddle, and in almost the same moment the prisoner wheeled and dashed away up the valley with both horses, waving his hat and sending back a yell of defiance.

CHAPTER II.

AN ASTOUNDING REVELATION.

THE wildest excitement instantly prevailed. Several shots were fired after the retreating rascal—as his action proved him to be; but the bullets all flew wide of the mark, as no one who had fired had taken the trouble to take aim.

Cibuta John, the inspector and the others hurried from the office, but by the time they were out the escaping prisoner was beyond range.

The inspector's man was just getting upon his feet, one hand clasped to the opposite shoulder.

"Are you much hurt?" the inspector inquired.

"I've got a bullet in the shoulder," was the response.

"Didn't you disarm him?"

"Yes, I thought I did, but he must have had another popper well concealed. He was quicker than lightning, and the first I knew I went over on the ground."

"You couldn't have had him well covered, that's all; but, he is gone, and I am glad it is no worse with you than it is."

"I haven't any excuse to offer," said the assistant, humbly, "but he was about the quickest man on the shoot that I ever met. We'll get him yet, however, for I'll go after him as soon as I can get this hole plugged up and can get hold of another horse."

"I guess you will be out of the race for awhile, Samuels, for you look pretty pale," responded the inspector. "What do you advise, sir?" turning to Cibuta.

"I think your man had better go to the hotel and have his wound seen to," was the answer. "We can go on with our work here, and I will provide you with horses and men, then, to recover your prisoner."

"All right, that's what we'll do. Go to the hotel, Samuels, and get yourself into shape again."

The assistant turned and started, looking rather pale and little fit for active service, and the inspector and the others returned into the office.

In the mean time, though, Cibuta John had quietly directed one of his deputies to get horses ready.

It was now the general opinion that the ex-postmaster was guilty, and he was the target of every tongue. Many little suspicions that had never been mentioned before, were freely voiced now, and taken all together they made the case against him a formidable one.

But, this was not all nor the worst of it. Discoveries were at hand that were destined to raise the excitement to the highest pitch.

Inside the office the inspector was proceeding with his work, but so far he had discovered nothing irregular. It was true, though, that he had hardly begun as yet, and little could be expected in so short a time.

examined first such books and papers as were open to inspection, and that done, proceeded a step further.

Unlocking the nearest drawer, he found the registry receipt book and other valuable matter. Opening the book and glancing at its entries, he remarked:

"It is a long time since any money business has been transacted here. Let us look further."

Another drawer was opened, and there was a surprise. There were found the commission that had been sent to the new postmaster months before, and letters and papers to others relative to the appointment.

"No further proof of the man's guilt is needed," said the inspector. "I must find and arrest him, and see that he is punished."

"And you shall have my help," promised Cibuta John.

The search did not stop there, but was continued, and finally when a closet was opened a startling revelation was made. It was a discovery that caused Cibuta John to exclaim:

"Moonlight Morgan, by all that's great!"

In the closet hung a long, black cloak, a three-cornered hat with a black plume in it, and a belt and sword; and on the floor stood a pair of high-top boots of a very theatrical pattern.

"Who is Moonlight Morgan?" the inspector asked.

"That is what has been puzzling this county for a year or longer," Cibuta answered; "and it now appears that Moonlight Morgan and Morgan Underwood are one and the same person. Who would have believed it?"

"That hardly gives me any enlightenment, sir," said the inspector.

"Quite true. Pardon me. This Moonlight Morgan is an outlaw who has been carrying things with a high hand during the period of time I have named. He has made some of the most daring robberies on the road, and has so far baffled all our efforts to apprehend him. It does not surprise me, now, that he got away from your man as he did. It is nothing to your assistant's discredit, and I owe him an apology for thinking otherwise."

"This highwayman has always appeared in just such a disguise as this—a long cloak, three-cornered hat, sword and top-boots, all black. Moonlight nights have been his favorite time for action and as he happened to make known his name on one occasion, he has been known ever since as Moonlight Morgan. The stage has been his especial prey, and he has always managed also to be on hand whenever the mail or Express has been especially rich."

"It is no wonder that he would not submit to being held a prisoner, but it is a wonder to me that your man was able to take him at all. He has baffled my deputies more than once. I have tried times without number, almost, to trap him, but he has always eluded me, and I have never been able to have the satisfaction of meeting him. The rascal! to think of the role he has been playing, and that never a thought of suspicion has been aroused against him."

"This is a revelation indeed," the inspector agreed, while the others stood as though spell-bound. "We must run him down, sheriff, and bring his iniquitous career to a close."

"It is easier said than done, I think," observed Cibuta. "Perhaps we shall have better success now, however, since his identity is known and he has no cover to run to. My belief is, however, that he will get out of this part of the country with all possible haste, and, with the two good horses he has, he will give us a hard run if we want to overtake him. But, overtake him we must. Our horses will soon be ready for us, and we will set out immediately."

"Yes, we must be after him without delay. Here, Mr. Derrick," turning to Uncle Dan, "here are the keys of this office. You will assume full charge from this moment. Straighten things out as well as you can, and I will see you again before I go away."

Uncle Dan took the keys, and poetically responded:

"I accept the trust, and promise, sir, to do the best I can; and though not much in most respects, I am an honest man. They all know me, the people here, and so, I'm sure, they'll say, so rest assured, sir, that there'll be no trouble from to-day."

"You are something of a rhymist, I see," the inspector observed, smiling.

"Yes," the old man answered and explained; "when I was young, you see, I tried to be a poet; and it has grown upon me till I rhyme and hardly know it."

At this the inspector laughed heartily, and followed Cibuta John to the door.

As soon as the door was opened, the crowd

outside demanded to know the result of the inspection.

"What did ye find, Cibuta?"

"Did yer git ther proof ag'in' him?"

"Is he ther feller what's been stealin' Widow Kildee's pension-money?"

These questions and a hundred more of the same sort were all put at the same time, almost, and Cibuta John, standing on the little stoop in front of the office, raised his hand as a signal that he would speak.

In a moment all were quiet, and Cibuta said:

"Fellow-citizens, that man Underwood is a rascal. We have found Uncle Dan's delayed commission and other letters, all hidden away in a locked drawer. Nor is this all we have discovered. You could not guess the rest. Morgan Underwood and Moonlight Morgan are one and the same person!"

"What?"

"What's that?"

"Ther doest yer say?"

"Jest say them word's ag'in'!"

A hundred such exclamations broke forth simultaneously, and the crowd showed the greatest excitement.

Cibuta John turned and said something to one of the men behind him, and the latter went in and brought out the disguise.

The shout that went up then was deafening, and it was some moments before the old-time hero of the town could make himself heard.

"You see we have the proof," he said, displaying the disguise. "Our postmaster has been playing a double role. It is no wonder that we could not catch him. He has doubled on us every time, has come back to town, and, while we have been scouring the county for him, has been here in the office laughing to himself over our defeat."

"Ther skunk!"

"Ther red-handed villain!"

"Ther double-dyed hoss-thief!"

Cibuta tossed the disguise back into the office, and he and the inspector and others set out for the hotel.

Ere they had gone far they met Cibuta's men coming with the horses, and they were directed to go to the hotel and wait, while Cibuta hastened to his house to tell his wife where he was going.

When he had performed that duty he rejoined the inspector at the hotel, armed for the trail, and found that his deputies were all ready, and waiting for him.

In the mean time the inspector's assistant, Samuels, had had his wound dressed, and was ready to set out with the others.

"You had better not go," the inspector advised.

"I would go if I were hurt twice as bad," was the response. "It is my fault that the fellow got away, and I want to have a hand in his recapture."

"You don't want to blame yourself for his getting off," said Cibuta, "for he is a terror, and has gotten away with some of the best men in this part of the country. He would have tricked any one else in just the same manner, no doubt."

"Much obliged to you for saying so, I'm sure," returned the assistant; "but that does not alter the facts of the case any, and I am going with you."

"All right, then," agreed the inspector; "let's be off."

Cibuta called his men "to horse," and in a moment all were mounted, and the word to start was given, when they galloped off up the valley in the direction the fugitive had taken.

The crowd cheered them as they set out, and a hundred different voices shouted a hundred different wishes of success, all to the effect, however, that the rascal might be brought back so that they might enjoy a good, old-fashioned hanging-bee.

In another moment the sheriff and his posse, with the two Government men, had passed out of sight, and the crowd was left to discuss the affair at leisure and at length.

CHAPTER III.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

It was the Ante-Bar of old.

Time had wrought changes, however, and the town was now more solid and substantial than it had been in the days when it was little more than a mining-camp.

Now it was the county seat, contained a court house and a sizeable jail, and had two churches and a growing cemetery. The last named boastworthy possession, however, was as old as the town itself, it having been started on the

very day when the town, as a simple camp, was first settled and named.

In addition to the features already itemized, the town had two good hotels and a number of saloons—the latter a matter of course.

With all these signs of increased civilization and respectability, though, it was still, as stated, the Ante-Bar of old. The same old citizens were still there, to a great extent, and the element of breezy roughness was not by any means wanting.

It was, in short, a typical town of the far Southwest.

Of the saloons mentioned, the "Pleasant Hour" was still the favorite, and Bill Twicker was still its worthy proprietor.

When Cibuta John and his men had departed, on the morning of which we write, a goodly portion of the crowd repaired to this place of resort.

The saloon was found open to receive them, and its regular patrons proceeded immediately to begin the day in the time-honored manner.

While they were thus engaged, and while all were discussing the startling revelation the morning had brought, a stranger entered the saloon and made his way in a swaggering manner to the bar.

He was a very large, raw-boned man, with a clean-shaven face, and had close-cropped hair of a fiery red. He was decidedly homely, and his face had a low, brutal cast. He wore a silk hat, which did not add anything to his beauty, and was clad in a suit of black velvet, the coat and vest of which displayed a very wide and "loud" binding. On his shirt-front flashed a big paste diamond, and a gorgeous ring adorned his right-hand little finger.

In brief, he looked all that he claimed to be—a prize-fighter.

When he reached the bar he leaned upon it with his left arm in a very familiar manner, surveyed the crowd coolly, and demanded:

"Whose treat is this, fellows?"

There was a moment's silence, and then some one answered:

"It ain't nobody's treat; it is every feller fer hisself."

"Oh, that's ther way you do it, eh? Well, now, every one of you come up and take somethin' at my expense. I want ter do th'right thing. I have just come to town, and I want ter show ye my good will."

Everybody in the room stepped forward, and while they were being served the stranger looked about him with critical eye.

"It is purty much ther same old place," he quietly observed, "only it has been fixed up considerable and made bigger."

This remark caused those around him to take a closer look at him. Some had an idea that there was something about him that was familiar to them, but they could not tell who he was.

"You've been here afore, then?" one observed in a questioning tone.

"Well, yes, some," was the slow answer.

The fellow continued looking around the room and presently his eyes rested upon a notice that seemed to interest him.

The notice was this:

"NOTICE!

"\$5,000 REWARD!

"The above reward will be paid for the arrest of the outlaw known as Moonlight Morgan, with positive proof of his identity. "JOHN JONES, Sheriff."

"Hello! what's this I see?" the unknown exclaimed, as soon as he had read it to the end.

"That is a reward for Moonlight Morgan," explained Bill Twicker, seeing what the man was looking at.

"Oh, I kin read that as well as you kin," the fellow said; "what I mean is ther name that's signed to it. Is that ther same John Jones that uster be here?"

"He has been here a good while," Bill admitted.

"And is he th' same feller that uster be called Cibuta John?" the man further inquired.

"He is the same John," he was told.

"Then he's my mutton!" the fellow exclaimed. "I have come ter this town a-purpose ter see him. Mebby you don't know me, boys, so I'll tell ye who I am. Come, though, take another dose first—as many of ye as wants ter."

As he said this he tossed a gold coin to the proprietor, and many of those present imbibed again.

"So that Cibuta John is yer sheriff now, is he?" the fellow mused aloud.

"That's what he is; and a good one he is, too," some one proclaimed.

"Well, he'll have ter be good in more ways than one, when I get at him," the fellow boast-

ed. "I have come ter this town fer th' purpose of lickin' him, an' you kin bet high that I'm goin' ter do it, too."

"Hold on, barkeeper, I'll treat myself, too, while it is goin' around."

He poured out a good glass of the fiery poison and dashed it off without a wink, and when he had received and pocketed his change he turned again to the crowd, demanding:

"Don't any of ye know me yet, fellers?"

"I have seen ye afore," averred Bill Twicker. "But, hang me if I kin tell when or where. Who be ye, anyhow?"

That was what everybody wanted to know.

"Jest let yer minds go back a matter o' some years," said the fellow, as he leaned back against the bar and rested his elbows upon it.

"Mebby you remember, some of ye, anyhow, another John Jones, that was called Giant John fer short."

"Oh! I know you now!" the proprietor of the place exclaimed.

"I thought some of ye would. Well, your Sheriff John killed Giant John, and some time later Giant John's brother kem heur ter have revenge. Sad ter tell, though, your John got away with him, too, though he didn't kill him. I am that same brother, boys, and my name is Jim Jones."

"What!" cried several; "not ther Giant Cupid?"

"Ther same," the fellow assured, with a smile at the recollection.

"Not ther old Shanghai Rooster from Jim-town Lode?"

"That is me, every time," was the admission.

"Ther feller what kem heur with a pair o' wings hooked to his back, crown' that he could whip anything that walked?"

"I am that same feller," the man acknowledged. "I am Jim Jones, th' brother to Giant John, and I am here fer th' one purpose of havin' revenge fer his untimely takin' off."

"Then you didn't get enough of it the other time, eh?" questioned the proprietor.

"I had enough fer that time," was the answer, "but now I am hungry fer more. Things has changed sence then, an' you will see somethin' that will s'prise ye some. D'ye know where I've been sence then?"

He was assured that they didn't.

"Well, I'll tell ye," he volunteered. "I have been East, an' I have been takin' lessons in boxin'. I am a reg'lar fighter now, an' if I don't jest more'n peel th' bark off o' this Cibuta John o' yours, then you kin take my head fer a football. Why, I have stood up afore Sullivan, I have!"

"Ther doost ye have!" incredulously.

"That's what I have, gentlemen," the fellow bragged, "an' I have got a New York paper here in my pocket what's got ther report of it in it. I stood him three good square rounds, and he only fetched me to me knees in th' fourth."

"And now you've drifted back here to lay out Cibuta John, have you," some one reiterated.

"That's what I have, fer a fact," the fellow assured. "That's what I went ter learn how ter fight for. I had ther idee in my head when I went away from here, an' as soon as I struck it rich I set out. Oh, I am ther same old Shanghai, I am! D'ye want ter hear me crow? *Cock-a-doodle-doo!*"

It was the same old crow, and it brought a roar of laughter from the crowd, especially from all who had known the fellow as the Giant Cupid.

"Oh, I am here, here with both feet!" the fellow cried, as he stepped away from the bar and threw himself into sparring attitude; "and if there's any fellow here what wants ter try me, let him step right up and do it. You kin bet that I have got all the p'int's now, an' more besides."

No one accepted the invitation, so the fellow recovered from his gladiatorial pose.

"By ther way," he asked, "where is this Cibuta John?"

"He has just left town on th' trail of Moonlight Morgan," he was told; "an' we can't tell when he will be back."

"He's out after Moonlight Morgan, is he? Well, I hope he'll git him, fer he won't be in condition ter tackle ther outlaw after I'm done with him. Oh, but you will see fun, you bet you will! If I don't do him up quick it will be 'cause I don't know how. I will pay him up fer the old and th' new, all in one dose."

If the fellow's story was true, it looked as though Cibuta would have work to do when he returned. No one had any fears for him, however. They had seen his prowess displayed too often.

"This is none of my business," observed Bill

Twicker, "but if you take my advice, Mr. Jones, you will keep clear of Cibuta John as you can. He is a bad man when you wake him up. But, you have had a taste of him, and you ought to know."

"Yes, I know what he is," the fellow owned, "an' I know that he can't hold a candle to me now. I'll stand him on his ear afore he kin wink. I don't want no advice about it, an' you can't buy me off that way ter save him. He's got ter suffer, an' that is all there is about it. You jest wait an' see, an' if you don't see him knocked out in jest one round, it will be mighty strange."

"Well, so-long fer th' present, boys; I must look around an' see th' town a little. I will see you all ag'in."

With that he waved his hand in a very patronizing way, and passed out.

"Well I'll be everlastingly chawed!" exclaimed Bill Twicker, "if this don't beat all! Who ever expected ter see that feller ag'in? If Sancho was only bigger, I vow I'd set him onter the old Cupid an' run him out o' town."

"If th' story he tells is true," remarked one Jem Patterson, "it may give our sheriff his hands full."

"Right you are," agreed the others. "We must see him as soon as he gets back, an' put him on th' racket."

"That's what we must, fer sure."

The matter was debated at length, and while the subject was still under discussion the door opened and a decidedly unique-looking character sauntered in.

"Hello, Driftabout!" he was greeted; "back again, are you?"

To this the nondescript waved his hand, bowed elaborately and responded.

"Yes, gentlemen all, I'm back again."

CHAPTER IV.

A CLEAN KNOCK-OUT.

"DRIFTABOUT" was a hard-looking customer.

He was remarkably dirty, his hands and face being strikingly so. He had on a battered and tattered hat, a pair of heavy boots that were all but gone, and his clothes were about the worst ever seen.

A few words concerning him will not be out of place.

His age was uncertain, though at a guess he might be set down as anything between thirty and forty. He had first made his appearance at Ante-Bar about a year previous to the time of our story. When asked to tell his name, he had said that it was Driftabout, and his subsequent comings and goings proved that he had been aptly dubbed.

This was the only name he had given, or would give, and by that unique appellation he was known. It was evening when he first appeared at Ante-Bar, and after spending some hours around the saloons he disappeared as suddenly as he had come. His next appearance was on Sunday, when he remained in town all day. After that he came occasionally on an evening, but when morning dawned Driftabout had drifted—no one could say whither. But, no one cared.

Such was the history—or all that was known of it—of the sorry-looking actor who now appeared upon the scene.

"Well, where are you bound for this time?" was asked, after the bow and response to the first greeting had been given.

"Oh, I'm just driftin' about, as usual," was the answer.

"And you're dry, as usual, too, no doubt."

"No doubt about it whatever," Driftabout assured. "If anything, I'm drier. Haven't had a nip in a couple o' days."

"Well, that is bad, certainly. You have arrived just too late."

"How is that?"

"Ther stuff has been set up twice fer th' crowd, free gratis fer nothin'."

Driftabout groaned.

"Is this ther truth?" he asked, turning to the proprietor.

"True as preachin'," Bill assured.

"Then, alas! I am undone," the miserable specimen of humanity sighed. "It seems to me that I am the football of Fate, and that I am bein' kicked th' wrong way all th' time."

His manner of saying this raised a laugh, and when it had subsided Bill Twicker said:

"Well, Driftabout, I'll be good to you this time, since you take it so to heart, and since we haven't seen you in so long I'll give you one on th' strength of that treat."

"I am yours truly forever!" the wretch ex-

claimed, as he skipped lightly to the bar. Bill, true to his word, poured out a glass of the best for him.

The fellow drank it leisurely, smacking his lips over it with great gusto, and when it was gone he wiped his mouth on his ragged sleeve and observed:

"Well, I've got the bulge on Fate fer once, if I never do ag'in."

Having had what he desired, he drifted to the rear end of the room and took a seat, and gradually the crowd thinned out and an hour or two soon rolled away.

It was about ten o'clock when the thunder of hoof-beats was heard in the valley, and Cibuta John and his party dashed into town.

A crowd appeared as though by magic, the hotels, saloons, stores etc., being emptied immediately at the first alarm, and the important discovery was instantly made that the ex-postmaster had not been captured.

It was seen, though, that the party had the two horses with which he had escaped.

The horsemen galloped up to the principal hotel, and Cibuta John was the first to touch the ground.

"Where's ther pris'ner?" was the instant demand.

"Well, we did not get him, as usual," Cibuta answered.

"Ye got ther hosses, though."

"Yes, we found them, but the man had disappeared. We followed the trail as far as Double Fork, and there it divided, one horse having gone way and one the other. We divided our force and followed both, and finally found the horses, but no trace of the rascal was to be seen."

When this had been said, one of Cibuta John's friends called him aside and warned:

"Sheriff, there is danger fer you heurabouts."

"What do you mean?" Cibuta asked.

The man explained all about the arrival of the old time Giant Cupid in a new dress, and about the threats he had made.

"You say he has been taking lessons in boxing?" Cibuta asked.

"Yes, that is what he claims."

"I don't like the looks of that," Cibuta admitted, "but he had better go a little slow with his game, or it may trip him up."

"I thought I'd tell ye, so that you could be looking out for him."

"All right, and I'm much obliged to you for it, too."

They turned back to the horses, where the inspector and the other men were giving the crowd fuller particulars about the fruitless chase, and the vagabond Driftabout was seen standing near the inspector, listening to what he had to say.

"I'll bet you fellers is sold," Driftabout put in, as the inspector finished what he had been saying.

"We know that we are," the inspector admitted; "but what do you mean, my tattered friend?"

"Cause," was the explanation, "I kem inter town this mornin' from th' south, an' I met a feller on a black hoss goin' in that direction as though he had been sent fur. He war jest whoopin' it, now I tell ye, an' I'll bet he was th' very feller you was lookin' fur."

Cibuta John heard this as he stepped up, and he took a searching look at the tattered demon. He knew Driftabout well enough, having seen him several times in the place, but now he looked upon him with a new interest.

"How far away was he, Driftabout?" Cibuta asked.

"Not more'n a mile, I should say," was the ready answer. "At th' rate he was goin', though, I should say that he must be a thousand miles away by this time. He was jest more than goin', an' that's th' fact."

"If that's the case," the sheriff decided, "we may just as well give him up for the present. Inspector, if you will come to my house we will have a talk over this matter."

Saying this as he turned from the tramp to the inspector, no further attention was given to Driftabout.

"All right," responded the inspector, "I'm with you, for I rely strongly upon you for his recapture, as you know the country better than I do."

They turned to go, when Cibuta found his way blocked by the man who had come to Ante-Bar with the avowed intention of whipping him.

Cibuta merely glanced at him and turned aside, but the fellow stepped before him again, this time demanding in a loud voice:

"Sa-ay, be you th' Cibuta John what uster prance around this place with a chip on yer

ader, invitin' everybody ter knock it off? You be I want ter know it, that's all."

"I am called Cibuta John," was the answer, "but I have no recollection of the performance you speak of."

"Oh, you ain't, eh? Well, I have, an' I am goin' ter let ye know it, too. I am th' Jim Jones what kem hear ter 'venge my brother, an' what got done up by you. I have come ag'in fer th' same purpose."

"To get 'done up' again?" Cibuta coolly asked. A howl of laughter greeted this, and the fighter glared around as though he would like to sail in and do up the whole crowd.

"No," he retorted hotly, "but ter do you up; an' I am goin' ter do it, too, so you kin make up yer mind to that."

"When are you going to begin?" Cibuta asked.

"I'll do it now, an' right heur, unless you are willin' ter meet me in th' ring in th' true gentleman style. You've got to fight, an' that is all there is about it. What d'ye say?"

"I certainly will not accept your proposal," was the answer. "I do not lay any claims to being a gentleman, and would no doubt be out of place in the prize ring. I have no quarrel with you anyhow, and you will oblige me if you will step out of my way."

"Ho, ho, ho!" the fighter laughed, "d'ye hear what he says? He's skarta'ready, an wants ter sink out of it. If you ain't got no quarrel with me I have got one with you, an' you have got ter defend yourself. I won't git out of yer way, an' that settles that."

Cibuta stepped to the other side and tried again to pass. His manner was cool, but those who knew him well saw that there was mischief in his eye.

Again his way was blocked, and then a sudden and surprising thing happened. Cibuta's right leg flew up with the quickness of thought, his heel was planted against the bully's breast with great force, and the fellow was sent spinning away out into the middle of the street, where he landed upon his back in the dust and dirt.

"Now, sir," said Cibuta to the inspector, as though nothing had occurred, "we will go on." The inspector could but admire the man's coolness.

"He will shoot you in the back, if you don't finish him and lock him up," he warned.

"My men will take care of him for the present," was the easy and confident response, and as he said it the sheriff gave his lieutenant a quiet signal what to do in the matter.

Cibuta and the inspector went on and the lieutenant turned and gave some orders to the other men, and when the disgraced prize-fighter scrambled to his feet, bellowing like a bull, he found himself covered by several revolvers.

He cut a sorry figure. His high hat was jammed down to his ears, and was broken in at the top and crushed in at the sides. He was covered with dust, and his pretty suit was no longer a thing of beauty. Added to all the rest, the crowd was laughing heartily over his inglorious mishap.

"Great bellowin' billers!" he screamed, "but you shell pay fer this! You ain't no gentleman, you ain't, ter fight that way. Come back heur, ye coward, or I'll send a chunk o' lead—"

So far he got, and was reaching for his weapons, when the lieutenant deputy called out:

"Hold on there! don't you draw that pop, or down you go!"

Then it was that the bully found the fix he was in, and was forced to yield to the inevitable. It was that or arrest, and he had no desire for the latter. He was "mad clear through," however, and was now even more bent upon revenge than he had been before. What came of it all remains to be shown.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGER IN DISTRESS.

UNCLE DAN DERRICK was the happiest man in Ante-Bar.

Restored to his old post, he took hold with a vim and proceeded to "hustle 'round" and get things straightened out.

He found the office in a terrible condition. The further he investigated, the worse he found it. It was so far different from the orderly manner in which he had always kept it, that it made him feel sick at heart.

The sympathy of the whole town was with him, altogether regardless of party differences. Dishonesty in the post-office would not be tolerated by either side, if known, and the very men

who had been most instrumental in putting Underwood into the office were now the staunchest, if possible, in support of the old postmaster.

Proof was soon forthcoming to show that the ex-postmaster had stolen everything of value that had come into his hands. Registered letters had been pilfered and destroyed, and all complaints made had met the same fate. The postmaster had the game right in his own hands. When he dared not steal from the office, or had no opportunity to do so, then it was easy for him to don his highwayman disguise and overtake and rob the carrier before he could reach the railroad, which was twenty miles distant.

When the old "post" had done the best he could, and had got the office into running condition once more, he sat down in his old chair, heaved a sigh, and expressed his sentiments thus:

"Of all mean men beneath the sun, the meanest, I allow, is the man who robs the U. S. mail; there'll be no robbing now!"

The day was drawing to a close when a lady entered the post-office and inquired:

"Is there a letter here for Azora Warrick?"

The woman was a stranger in the place, and the postmaster had never seen her before.

After a glance at the "W" box, Uncle Dan replied:

"No, ma'am, it gives me pain to say; there's nothing here for you to-day."

"Are you quite sure?" the woman persisted, in a tone of commingled surprise and alarm.

The "W" box was entirely empty, and pointing to it, the postmaster replied:

"I'm just as sure as sure can be; there's nothing there, as you can see."

"It is very strange," the woman observed. "I am looking for a letter that should have been here a week ago at latest. The letter I expected to get would no doubt be registered, sir."

The postmaster sighed.

"If that's the case, ma'am," he said, "then I fear your letter has been stolen here. You see, I've just come in to-day, and the other man has sure away. He is a rascal, thorough and through; who stole some letters from me, too; and thus your letter, if so be it, it came to him, you'll never see it."

The woman's face had grown pale while the postmaster was speaking, and when he finished she gasped:

"Good heavens! what shall I do? I am almost out of money, as it took nearly all I had to reach here. I expected to find my letter here sure, as it has never failed before, but now I am all but penniless in a strange town, and it will take at least two weeks for me to order and get another remittance from the East."

Uncle Dan looked at her pityingly, and said:

"If what you say is all true blue, then Ante-Bar will see you through till you can write East to your friend, and get the money he will send. We're not the folks to brag and boast, but in good deeds we're just a host. You see that white house over there? There lives the sheriff of Ante-Bar. You just go there and tell your tale; his wife will help you without fail."

The woman brightened up immediately.

"How can I thank you!" she exclaimed. "I can assure you, sir, that what I say is strictly true. As soon as I can get word to my friends, they will help me out. I will write immediately. Please give me paper and envelope, and a stamp."

These were furnished and paid for, and in a few minutes the woman had written a brief letter.

"You will oblige me if you will read this, sir," she then said, offering the sheet to the postmaster before folding it; "it will show you that I am not an impostor."

Uncle Dan declined to take it, saying:

"I'm satisfied with what I've heard; your honest face backs up your word."

"I thank you for your good opinion," returned the woman, "but you will do me a favor if you will read it. I really desire you to do so."

The old postmaster further protested, but finally took the letter and read it. It was as follows:

"ANTE-BAR, N. M., Nov. 26, 1889.
HENRY HUNTING, Esq.,
Att'y at Law, New York City:—

"DEAR SIR:—I have just arrived here, but find no remittance from you. As the post-office has recently been in the hands of a thief, however, I suppose the letter has met the fate of many others. Do not fail to send me five hundred dollars by first return mail.

"Yours truly,
AZORA WARRICK."

When he read it, Uncle Dan handed it back, observing:

"This letter is less proof to me that you are what you claim to be, than is the evidence of sight, which sums you up as straight and right."

"I assure you that you are not mistaken," responded the woman, as she received the letter from his hand, "and I must thank you again for your good opinion. I only hope that the lady to whom you have directed me will see me in the same light."

The old postmaster responded suitably, and when the woman had sealed and directed her letter she dropped it into the box and went out.

She was a fine-looking woman of about thirty, well-dressed in a suit of strong and serviceable material. Her conversation and manner showed her to be educated and refined.

When she left the office she went in the direction of Cibuta John's house, following the postmaster's suggestion and advice.

Driftabout, the wretched tramp, happened to be coming in the opposite direction at the time, and the lady had not gone far when she met him.

She turned aside to give him plenty of room, not noticing him with more than a casual glance, but as Driftabout looked at her, as she passed him, he turned pale for a moment under his coating of dirt and gave a start of recognition.

The woman passed on, and the tramp stood and stared after her as though he could not believe he had seen aright.

"She here!" he exclaimed under his breath; "I must take care to keep out of her sight. Lucky she did not look at me— But, she would never recognize me in such a make-up as this."

Driftabout watched her till he saw where she was going, and then drifted on toward the nearest saloon.

The woman entered the yard of the sheriff's house, passed up the walk to the door, and knocked.

It was Nettie, Cibuta's pretty wife, who answered the knock, and when she opened the door and the caller caught sight of her face the stranger had confidence that she had found a friend.

"Are you the sheriff's wife? or his daughter?" the stranger asked.

"I am his wife," Nettie answered pleasantly.

"I am a lady in trouble," the caller explained, coming at once to the point, "and your good-hearted postmaster directed me to come to you, leading me to hope that you will help me."

"It will give me pleasure to do so if I can," Nettie assured. "Come right in and let me hear your story."

She threw open the door and the woman entered, and when Nettie had closed the door she conducted her into a neat and tidy sitting-room.

When they had taken seats the stranger began her story immediately.

"The name under which I am traveling is Azora Warrick," she started. "That is not my real name, which, for good reasons, I do not care to disclose. I am from New York. When I arrived here to-day I expected to find a registered letter awaiting me at the post-office, but the postmaster informs me that it is very probable that it has been stolen by his rascally predecessor. Be that as it may, the letter is not there, and it places me in a very embarrassing position. I have less than a dollar in hand, and it will take perhaps two weeks for me to receive another remittance from the East."

"You are in trouble, true enough," Nettie remarked. "In what way can I be of service to you? Do you want money to help you to your destination? Where are you traveling to?"

"This is my destination for the present," was the answer. "I intended stopping here for a week anyhow, but now I shall be obliged to remain until my money comes. I have written to my lawyer in New York, and a remittance will be sent as soon as my letter reaches him. The greatest favor you can do me is to assist me in finding a place to stop until the money reaches me. I have a watch and some rings that I can offer as security, and—"

Nettie had watched the woman narrowly while she was talking, and had reached the same conclusion that the old postmaster had arrived at—that she was a lady, and that her story was true.

"Do not mention that," she hastened to interrupt. "You may remain right here until my husband comes, and then I will consult with him. Whatever his decision is, however, I can promise you that you will be assisted. Lay aside your hat and wrap."

It may be mentioned, by the way, that Cibuta had gone out of town, quietly, after his consultation with the post-office inspector, and that his

wife knew that it was uncertain when he would return.

"I appreciate your kindness," responded the woman, "but I will not attempt to thank you. I am only too glad to accept your invitation, and shall try to repay you for your goodness at some other time. Now that you have promised me your assistance, I will tell you more about myself."

"You need not do so unless you desire to," said Nettie, quickly.

"It is your right to know something about me," the woman returned. "What I am about to tell you, however, I would not like to have known publicly. It might frustrate me in the business that has brought me here."

"Whatever you may see fit to tell me will not be repeated, except, perhaps, to my husband," Nettie promised.

"Thank you; I know I can trust you. The business that has brought me here is a hunt for a recreant husband. He is not my own husband, understand; I have never married; but the husband of a dear dead sister, whom he robbed and deserted and left to die of a broken heart. She met him clandestinely, married him secretly, and before I was aware of her intentions she had placed her fortune into his hands. In a few months he disappeared, leaving her penniless, and a short time later she died. She loved him, and her blood is upon his head as truly as though he had murdered her outright."

"Knowing that he was familiar with this part of the country, I thought he had come here, and for three years I have been going from place to place in search of him. Only let me meet him, and— Well, it will be a sad meeting for him."

"What is his name?" Nettie asked.

"The name he gave was Hudson Haverstraw," was the answer, "but I am inclined to think that that was fictitious."

Their conversation ran on, but all that immediately concerns the interest of our story has been set forth.

CHAPTER VI.

RATHER A SURPRISE.

ONE of the prettiest girls at Ante-Bar at this time was Amelia Haydon.

She was the only child of Stephen Haydon, a man who had come to the town with a small capital, opened a good general store, and amassed quite a comfortable fortune in a few years.

She was about eighteen years of age, pretty—as said, having a bright and clear complexion and a graceful figure; but she was not educated to any great degree, nor was she considered any too bright.

Not that she was silly, but she was not quick, or witty, or deep, nor was she anything of a thinker. She was easily imposed upon, and having no guile in herself, did not look for any in others.

The sudden downfall and flight of Morgan Underweed affected Amelia in a manner different from that of any one else.

She ran to her room, locked the door, and had a hearty cry.

The explanation is easy. The rascal had been paying attention to her on the sly, and she loved him.

When her cry was out, and it had lasted about an hour, she went down to the store, with her eyes red and strained, and took her place at the fancy-goods counter.

She helped her father in the store, and she was, as he well knew, his best card. Her pretty face behind the counter brought many a dollar to his till.

As it happened, there was no one in the store but her father.

"You are late this mornin', Melia," he observed.

"Yes," she owned; "I could not help it."

"Couldn't help it, eh?" and he looked at her, noticing that her voice was a little husky.

"No, sir."

"You have been blubberin', that's what you've been doin'," her father accused. "What's been th' matter?"

"I—I have a bad cold," she evaded.

"It ain't so bad as yer eyes look, though, gal. You will be a nice-lookin' one to-day, now won't ye?"

"Shall I go back, then?" she asked.

"No, ye needn't go back; ye can stay here and be ashamed all day, if ye want to. Say, I believe you have been blubberin' after that thief of a postmaster, fer I have noticed that you was gettin' sweet on him. Is it so? If it is, th' best thing you can do is to drop him from your mind mighty lively."

The girl had turned away to hide her emotion, and busied herself with fixing up things in her part of the store.

Haydon said no more to her, and when the morning business opened up brisk he forgot all about it and was happy in the inflow of the dollars.

Late in the afternoon, when the business was at a standstill, Amelia found herself in the store alone.

She had nothing to do, and was seated on a stool behind the counter. Her manner was very sad, and her thoughts were with her disgraced lover.

After awhile she drew a photograph from her bosom and kissed it several times heartily.

"I will not believe all the bad things they say of you," she muttered. "You are innocent, and this is only a plot to ruin you. I know that you will come back, and that you will prove your innocence, and then we shall be happy. No; though all the world be against you, yet will I be true."

A step on the porch startled her, and with one more hasty kiss she thrust the photograph into the bosom of her dress.

The door opened, and who should enter but Driftabout, the ragged, dirty, miserable tramp. At sight of him the girl sprung up with a cry of alarm.

"Don't git skart, miss, don't git skart," the tramp spoke up reassuringly; "I don't intend ter harm a hair of yer purty head."

"What do you want here?" Amelia tremblingly asked.

"What do I want?" the fellow repeated as he shuffled forward to the counter; "what does a gentleman most allus want when he enters a store? He wants ter buy somethin', of course. That ain't exactly my case, though. Say," in a lower tone, "I have got a private letter fer ye. Is anybody 'round?"

"A private letter for me?" in surprise.

"That's what I have, miss."

"Who is it from?"

"It is from Morgan Underweed," was the whispered answer.

The girl was now eager, excited, nervous and all the rest of it.

"Let me have it, quick," she said, "before some one comes in."

"All right, here it is. You must take th' best of care that no one else gets a look at it, fer it would git Underweed inter trouble."

As the fellow said this he produced a very dirty envelope from somewhere among his rags, and handed it over.

The girl took it eagerly enough.

"You will see what he has ter say in it about me," the tramp added. "You are ter send yer answer by me, when ye git ready to answer it, an' I'll see to it that he gets it all right. I'll drop in some time ter-morrer, when I see yer dad go out, an' you kin have th' answer ready fer me then."

"All right, I'll perhaps have it ready. Come in and see, anyhow."

"Yer wouldn't mind givin' a feller th' price of a drink, would ye, miss?" the fellow asked.

"No, of course not; here it is," and she tossed him a ten-cent piece.

"Thank 'e," Driftabout said, with a bow; "I'll be off now afore any one kin see me here."

"Yes, do," the girl urged, anxious to have him get out of sight before her father came in.

The miserable-looking fellow drifted out, and Amelia hastened to learn the contents of the letter he had brought.

She tore it open, unfolded the sheet and read:

"DEAREST AMELIA:—

"While everybody else is against me, I am sure that you will not believe for a moment the terrible things they say about me. I swear to you that I am innocent of all, and that this is a plot to ruin me and separate me from you. I know that you love me, and that I can safely trust you to help me in this hour of great need. You must fly with me and become my bride. I cannot be happy a day without you. Come to me as soon as you can, after we have arranged it all, and we will go away until my innocence is made clear, and then we will come back and give your father a happy surprise. As I have been obliged to leave so suddenly, I have no money, so do not fail to come with plenty of that with you. I can repay it all to your father when we return. Do not mention this to any one. The bearer of this is to be trusted, and he will call again tomorrow for your reply. Do not fail me, loved one, and we shall be as happy as mortals can be.

"With a heart full of love,

"MORGAN."

The girl's eyes filled with tears as she read, and her whole heart went out in sympathy for the rascal who addressed her in such endearing terms.

Innocent? Of course he was! She would take his word against a thousand. It would

show him how much she loved him, to trust and believe in him when every one else was against him.

But, should she run away with him, and at the same time take money from her father to help them to make good their escape?

That was a point that ought to have received more consideration and careful thought than it did.

It was only too quickly decided.

Yes, she would go, and she would do just as he requested. How else could she show her devotion to him? It would only be for a time, anyhow, and then they would come back, the money would be repaid to her father, he would forgive them, and all would be happiness.

The oftener she read the letter over, the more reasonable it seemed, and in a little time she was in full sympathy with the rascal's plan.

Her blind love for him made her fall an easy victim.

She destroyed the envelope and placed the letter in her bosom with the photograph, and when her father returned he could not suspect that anything out of the usual course was in the wind.

In the mean time Driftabout had gone back the way he had come, and it was on this occasion that he met the stranger, Azora Warrick.

He watched her, after she had passed him, as stated, until he saw her enter the yard of Cibuta John's house, and then he went on to a saloon.

When he entered the saloon, the "Pleasant Hour" by the way, he met the post-office inspector just coming out.

"Hello!" the latter exclaimed, "here you are, eh? I have been looking for you."

"Lookin' fer me?" Driftabout interrogated.

"Exactly."

"An' what do ye want with me?"

"I want to have a little talk with you. Come back in here, where we can sit down, and I will order something to moisten your throat."

"I'm yer chicken," said the fellow readily enough. "If there's likker in it, I am yours ter command."

"I thought you would be."

The inspector turned back into the saloon, and Driftabout followed him to a table where they sat down.

"Now," opened the inspector, when he had ordered something for the fellow to drink, "I want to ask you a few questions."

"Fire right ahead," was the invitation.

"You are the fellow who saw that thief of a postmaster running away toward the south as you were coming to this place this morning, are you not?"

"I'm th' feller," was acknowledged.

"Good. Now, are you sure it was the postmaster?"

"Well, no, I couldn't swear to it, but when I got here and heard that he'd skipped, then I nat'rally thought it must be."

"Oh, then you had never seen the postmaster, eh?"

"Yes, I'd seen him, but never at short range."

"Well, did this man look like him?"

"Yes, I think he did; but, then, you see he was a goin' so like th' old feller from below that I hadn't much time ter study him up."

"No, I suppose not. It is too bad— Throw up your hands, Morgan Underweed! or it is death to you on the spot!"

The inspector's hand suddenly came up above the table, a cocked revolver in its grasp, and he broke in upon what he was saying to utter that thrilling command.

CHAPTER VII.

FIGHTER JIM'S FROWESS.

It was a thrilling moment.

The post-office inspector had uttered the command in a louder tone than he had been employing, and all eyes were turned in his direction.

The suspense was of only one second's duration however.

Driftabout was seen to throw up his hands quickly at the order, but the next instant he did something more.

His feet suddenly came up under the table with terrific force, lifting it clear of the floor and sending the inspector's weapon flying out of his grasp.

It was so sudden and so unexpected that it could not be guarded against.

But it did not stop there. No sooner was the revolver out of the inspector's hand than Driftabout was upon his feet, and at the same time, as it seemed, he sent a chair spinning through a window, taking out sash and all.

The next instant he had followed it, and al-

though the inspector's assistant fired after him, he did not stop.

"After him!" cried the inspector. "A thousand dollars to the man who takes him! It is Moonlight Morgan!"

The crowd was spellbound, and it was some moments before they could be awakened into action.

The assistant had already sprung out through the window, but when he looked around the seeming tramp had disappeared as utterly as though the earth had opened and taken him in.

When the crowd moved, it was as one man, and men poured out through the door and the broken window in hot haste.

But they were too late. Their bird had taken wings. Where he could be no one could understand, but that he was gone was plain enough.

"Is it possible that that feller was Moonlight Morgan?" Bill Twicker questioned.

"That Driftabout was ther ex-postmaster?" added another.

"It can't be!" exclaimed others.

"It is the exact truth of the situation, however," the inspector declared. "Did his action suit the character he was playing?"

"Well, hardly; but—"

"That is just it. It was a clever disguise, and as he has appeared in it before, you did not suspect it. Did you ever see him and your ex-postmaster at the same time?"

No one could remember that they had ever been seen together. It was recalled that the postmaster had been out of town on the Sunday when Driftabout had spent the day at the Bar.

"How did you get onto him?" some one asked.

"It was not I, but your Cibuta John," the inspector owned. "He suspected him this morning, and this afternoon he went out to see if he could see any signs of a horseman having run toward the south. He sent word back that nothing of the kind was to be seen, and directed me to watch him, saying that he would help us take him to-night."

"You made a mistake in not waitin', then," observed Bill Twicker.

"So I see now, but I never dreamed that the fellow could escape me when I had the drop on him."

"You will not blame me now for letting him escape me," remarked the assistant, quietly.

"Not a bit," the inspector exclaimed, heartily. "The fellow is a very devil, and now I can understand why such a sum is offered for him. Your sheriff told me he was a bad man, but I underrated him."

"It has got to be a bad man that Cibuta John can't get away with," said Jeff Parsons, "and this fellow has had th' best of th' game so far."

"Well, he is gone now, and it can't be helped," said the inspector. "No doubt your sheriff will be wrathful enough when he returns, but I thought I had the case right at an end."

It was a startling sensation, and the news flew like wildfire.

The citizens could not believe that it was true, at first telling, but the proof followed, and the fact had to be accepted.

What had become of the daring outlaw, after he had sprung through the window, however, was a mystery. It seemed that the inspector's assistant had been right at his heels, and it did not seem possible that he could have gained the shelter of the nearest building unseen.

By the time the excitement had abated, night had shut down over the town, and lamps were ablaze in every window.

Cibuta John had not yet put in an appearance, nor did he come as the evening advanced.

In the mean time Jim Jones, the old-time Giant Cupid, or Shanghai, had not been altogether idle.

After his defeat at the hands—or rather the foot—of Cibuta John, at the hotel, he was for about an hour the maddest man ever seen, if that can be claimed. It is certain that no man was ever more enraged.

He raved and swore and fumed around, threatening what he would do when the time came, but as he had a wholesome fear of the revolvers of the sheriff's men, he did not attempt to follow Cibuta to the house.

His silk tie being as good as worthless, he had invested in a hat of a different pattern, one of the white, broad-brimmed sort. This change wrought a transformation in his appearance. Where before he had looked the genuine prize-winning tough, now he looked the typical border ruffian of the dressy, vainglorious sort.

During the day he had imbibed freely of "jig-water," too, but he was not by any means drunk. He had enough aboard to make him desperate and doubly ugly, however, and he was both.

It was about nine o'clock when he pranced in to the Pleasant Hour.

He had been making a round of the other saloons, where he had been carrying things with a high hand.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" he crowed loudly, "heer I be with both feet an' spurs on! I'm th' cock of ther walk, an' don't ye fergit it! I'm th' man what's stood up afore Sullivan, I am, an' I kin lick anything that stands in boots. Where is that 'ar Cibuta John o' yours? It looks ter me as though he was skart out, an' was hidin' away ter keep from meetin' me. Anbody know where he is?"

Nobody did.

"An' where's that post-office inspector feller what let Moonlight Morgan git away from him? That was a purty trick, that was, an' fer a per-fesh detective, too. It orter 'a' been me; you kin bet that I would 'a' gobbled ther galoot."

The inspector and his man were there, but they remained silent, having no desire to get into any trouble with the fellow.

The blowing bully looked around until he espied them.

"Hello! here ye be, eh?" he cried, walking over to where they sat. "Don't ye feel sorter 'shamed o' yerselves? You wasn't ye out ter make yer mark in this part of the kentry, not by a big sight ye wasn't."

"Are you addressing me?" the inspector asked looking up.

"In course I be!" cried the self-styled prize-fighter. "Who d'ye s'pose I'm talkin' ter? I should think Uncle Sam would feel proud of ye, when ye go back an' report that ye couldn't do ther biz fer him. Say, what'll ye give me ter nab that cuss fer ye, an' land him in ther lock-up?"

Inspector Riggles was glad to see the turn the talk was taking, for he had no desire to have trouble with the fellow, as he said:

"I will give you a thousand dollars in addition to the reward already offered," he answered.

"Bully!" cried the fighter: "I'm yer turnip, top an' all. Jest let that feller show his nose here again, an' see if I don't tie him into a double bow-knot."

"But," he turned away and bellowed, "where, oh! where is yer gallus sheriff? He is ther galo t that I am pinin' ter see. I want ter git jest one crack at his nose, an' that is all I ask. If I don't turn his face inter a pancake, ye kin call my name Mud. Where is ther slinkin' coward? He is afeerd ter meet me, an' that is plain. Oh! but wouldn't I like ter git jest one round out o' him!"

"Say, won't some feller come up an' let me knock him down, jest ter keep my hand in? I'll make it an object to ye; I'll give fifty dollars to ther man what will stand me two rounds an' not git knocked out. Come, now, speak right up, gentlemen, but don't all speak at once. Who is ther first?"

He looked around him as though anxious to find some one to hammer.

There was one fellow in the room who considered himself something of a fighter, and this offer of fifty dollars roused him up.

This man was known as "Sledge" Devitt. He was a teamster, and a powerfully-built fellow. He was not a brawler, but when occasion required could defend himself ably enough, and the powerful blows he struck had won for him the nickname "Sledge."

"I'll take that offer, mister," he announced, "if you will put ther money into th' hands of Bill Twicker."

The big bully wheeled around and looked at him.

"Good enough!" he cried. "You come up like a lamb to the slaughter. Here is ther money," counting it out and tossing it over to the bar-keeper; "an' now git out of yer clothes an' put up yer dooks."

The teamster threw off his hat and coat and stepped forward, and the fighter set his hat back a little and met him.

He did not take the trouble to remove either hat or coat.

"Hold on!" cried Bill Twicker, suddenly; "who is goin' ter pay fer damages if anything gets broke?"

"Ther man what gets knocked out, if it's agreeable ter my 'ponent," answered the homely giant.

"I'm agreed ter that," said the teamster, and then they stood up to the mark and made ready.

It could be seen that the old Cupid was used to this sort of thing, by the way he put up his hands.

There was a pause of a moment, and then the giant made a pass. The teamster met it and returned it with his left. That the giant parried,

and the next instant the teamster sent in a blow with his right which, had it struck, would almost have lifted the giant's head from his shoulders.

But the blow did not take effect. The giant stooped and let it pass over the top of his head, it doing no further damage than taking off his hat; and in the same instant there was a crack like the report of a rifle and the teamster went spinning away to the further end of the room, where he dropped in a heap, limp and motionless.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" the giant crowed. "That's ther way ter do it. Ain't there some-body else that wants some? I want ter keep my hand in."

Nobody did, it seemed, and several hurried to the help of the fallen man. He was half unconscious, and the blood was running from his nose and ears. He was out of the fight for good, and his friends proceeded to mend him up.

"Oh! where is that Cibuta John?" the giant cried, as he pranced around the room swinging his arms; "I'm just dyin' ter meet him. This is th' hour that I have longed fer this many a day. Where is ther coward?"

"Shut up, you lantern-jawed baboon!" a voice suddenly cried; "and while you are waitin' fer Cibuta John, jest practice on me."

All eyes turned instantly to the door.

CHAPTER VIII.

CIBUTA JOHN ON DECK.

A STRANGER had just entered.

He stood just within the door, his hands upon his hips and his feet set wide apart.

While he was not a large man, yet he looked to be solidly put together. He was clad in the roughest manner, and looked like a miner in hard luck. He had long and straggling hair and beard of a fiery red; wore a ragged slouch hat and heavy boots of the "stogy" sort; and the rest of his outfit was made up of a suit of much patched buckskin.

He was a stranger to all present, and Inspector Riggles and his man Samuels looked at him with considerable interest.

The prize-ring tough had wheeled around and faced him at the first word, and after he had surveyed him for a moment he burst into a loud laugh.

"Haw, haw, haw!" he roared, "what is it anyhow! Why, you poor, foolish critter, I could do you up with both hands tied! What be ye talkin' about? Did you see ther way in which I jest disposed of a feller that could git away with a dozen like ye? Go 'way, sonny," and he waved his hand in a most belittling manner.

"That's all right," returned the stranger, "but you are lookin' fer fight an' I am willin' ter lend myself ter amuse ye. If I git ther wust of it, that's my business. Ef you want somebody ter practice on while you're waitin' for Cibuta John, whoever he is, jest belt away at me. It's my funeral if you do me up."

"Why, dast yer cheek," cried the fighting bully, "yer can't be in earnest, be ye? If I hit ye once it will lay ye up fer a week."

"That's all right; if I'm willin' ter take th' chances you shouldn't kick. I guess ye're afeerd o' me."

"What!" the giant screamed, "afeerd o' sich a lookin' scarecrow as you be! Jest trot yer kerkiss up here an' I'll show ye. It seems ye are bound ter have it, an' so I may as well give ye a taste. Come right up ter ther scratch, ye measly-lookin' chicken, an' see me curl yer feathers fer ye."

The interest was now at fever heat, and the suppressed excitement was intense. Who could the daring stranger be? was the question in every mind.

"All right, you long-legged, big-nosed, bullet-headed, wide-mouthed, wopper-jawed, flop-eared, dirty-handed son of a kiodle!" the stranger poured forth as he advanced in an ungainly manner, "you are welcome ter curl me inter a double-twisted cork-screw, if ye kin do it."

The bully's anger boiled over at being addressed like this, and he fairly grated his teeth in his rage.

"I'll take all o' that out o' ye," he hissed. "Jest git out of yer coat, so ye kin swing yerself, an' see if I don't make a hospitable subject of ye in jest two winks an' a quarter."

"Never mind about my coat," returned the stranger; "take me jest as ye find me an' ax no questions. Come on if ye're ready."

As he said this he put up his hands, though not in a very masterful way.

It looked like sheer foolishness for him to meet the giant, and everybody expected to see him

laid out with even more suddenness than the teamster had been.

"Yes, I'm ready," declared the old-time Cupid, "an' you'll wish ye never was born afore I'm done with ye."

As he said this he threw himself into the proper pose, and the two faced each other.

If size went for anything, then the giant had decidedly the advantage, not considering anything else; but with the prowess he had already displayed, the chances for the stranger were slim indeed.

There was one thing in the stranger's favor, however, though it was something that nobody noticed. He was perfectly cool, while the fighter was now in a towering passion.

No time was lost, and the giant began his attack at once; and so over-confident was he that he did not exercise proper caution. He swung his arms for a moment, and then sent out a blow which, from his point of view, was to settle the matter at once.

But he found his mistake, and was brought to his senses in a way he did not greatly relish. The blow was parried easily, and in return the stranger gave him a tap on the nose with just force enough to start the "claret."

The giant bellowed like an angry bull, and the crowd cheered immensely. It was a surprise to all.

"I'll fix ye fer that!" the giant screamed; "I'll crack yer skull fer yer! I kin do it, an' you'll be sorry fer that trunp afore you're done wi' me."

At the stranger he rushed, with all the force and fury he could summon, and now using all the caution and "science" at his command. It was a terrific attack, and it required all the stranger's skill to parry the rapid blows, without any attempt at returning them.

Step by step the stranger was forced back, ducking his head and dodging this way and that, but escaping every blow, though some of them were very close to the target.

Back and back he went, but managing to move in such a way as to keep in the clear part of the room, and the rage of the bully increased with every vain effort to hit him.

"Oh! but I'll pulverize ye when I do hit ye!" the giant screamed. "I'll mash yer pate inter jelly! I'll knock yer teeth clear through ye! I'll jump on ye an' flatten ye out like a flap-jack!"

"What do you think of it?" asked Inspector Riggles of his man.

"I think the old fellow is good for him," was the answer. "He is waiting for him to weaken."

"I believe you are right."

The bully was working away like a steam engine, and he was wasting valuable breath in his brags and threats.

At the end of a minute he was breathing heavily, and suddenly he drew back from his attack to recover his wind.

But the stranger allowed him little time to do so. In about five seconds he shouted "time!" and at him he sprung, forcing the fighter to his work again.

By this time the giant had found that he had run against a snag, and wished himself well out of the difficulty. He saw where he had made his serious mistake. He had forced things too hard.

His rage outran his reason, however, and when he entered upon the second round he fought with even more fury than before.

The stranger backed away from him the same as at first, parrying every blow, though some of them were not easy to dodge.

This lasted about a minute, and the giant fell back again, this time panting.

"Don't give it up that way," called out the stranger; "take all th' fun out o' me ye want. It will give ye th' best o' practice fer that other feller ye are dyin' ter meet. Whoop 'em up, 'Liza Jane, an' let's give th' boys ther worth of ther money. Come ter time, you mush pated, bone-spavined, yaller-toothed, big-footed, prison-cropped son of a bob-tailed kangaroo! or I'll put a balter on ye and sell ye fer th' jackass ye are. Come, hussle up, or I'll—"

This was too much, and the prize-fighter, the man who, according to his own story, had faced Sullivan, could not stand it.

His hand flew behind him and came to the front with a revolver in its grasp.

"I'll show ye what—"

He got no further. He found himself peering into the tube of a revolver in the hand of the stranger.

The stranger had made a movement that rivalled the very lightning, and he had the "drop" in the good old-fashioned way.

"Drop that shooter, you cur!" he ordered, "or I'll perforate the tabernacle of your earthly walk before you can think Jack Robinson!"

The giant hesitated only for a second, and let the weapon drop to the floor; and at the same time a great cheer went up from the crowd. Many of them had recognized the weapon in the stranger's hand.

"Rah fer Cibuta John!" was the shout. "Rah fer th' old Prickly Pear. Oh! but you woke up ther wrong passenger this time, old Shanghai!"

Cibuta John it was, and while he still held the giant covered, he took off the false hair and beard that had so well disguised him.

The giant looked at him in open-mouthed amazement.

Inspector Riggles and his man were scarcely less surprised, for while they had thought that perhaps the man might be their escaped prisoner, they had no idea that it would prove to be the sheriff.

"Well, what do you think about it?" Cibuta asked, speaking to the giant.

"This is a dirty trick!" the fellow cried; "I didn't know that I was fightin' you."

This was greeted with a howl of laughter. What difference did it make whether he knew it or not?

"I suppose your attempt to shoot me was not a trick, eh?" observed Cibuta.

"How d'ye know I was goin' ter shoot?" was the blustering demand.

"We don't want to see, out here," was the answer. "When a cur like you goes down for his pop we infer right away that he means business, and act accordingly. Are you satisfied, or do you want some more?"

The bully saw that his reputation was at stake, and that it was now or never. He must make a final effort.

"Satersfied!" he cried; "not by a good deal I ain't. I'm goin' ter lick ye if it takes all night. Put up yer shooter an' let me git at ye!"

Cibuta's revolver disappeared, and he put up his arms.

At him the giant rushed, and this time the hero of the Bar met him firmly. Not an inch did he back, but fought in the way that gave the ring-bully a surprise.

Two things were in Cibuta's favor. The bully was already short of wind, and was panting, and, being a pretty hard drinker, his strength could not hold out. On the other hand, Cibuta was in perfect condition, his wind was good, and his strength did not show any signs of flagging.

In such tests of strength and endurance, other conditions being equal, it is the drinking man who must go to the wall every time.

For about half a minute Cibuta held the giant in check, and then he began an attack on his part. He sent in blow for blow, but it was some time before he could put one in with effect. The bully was certainly "up" in the "art" of the ring, and had been in perfect training, he could no doubt have given Cibuta much harder work.

Finally the hero of the town sent a telling blow straight home, and the big fellow was sent end over end half-way down the room and deposited almost senseless under a table. The battle was over.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DARE DEVIL SEEN.

WHAT use trying to describe the excitement that prevailed in the Pleasant Hour, when the final knock-out was given and the fight brought to a close?

Three cheers and a rousing "tiger" were given for Cibuta John, and the crowd shouted itself hoarse.

When the cheering was about at an end, the self-styled prize-fighter crawled out from under the table.

He was considerably tamed.

"Have ye had enough, Shanghai?" some one demanded.

"Will yer give it up as a bad job?" inquired some one else.

"Ther Prickly Pear is jest as full o' stickers as ever, ain't he?" chimed in yet another.

And so the questions were fired at him thick and fast.

"This heur thing ain't settled yet," the old-time Cupid avowed. "That wasn't a fair fight anyhow, an' it don't count. I wasn't in trim fer it. Wait till I tackle him ag'in, an' then you'll see ther fur fly."

A howl of laughter greeted him.

"It will be yer own fur, if we do," was the general response.

"How about that fifty dollars that's in Bill's

hands," some one called out. "It strikes me that it is ther Cupid's treat."

Instantly there was a howl, and the bully had no way out of it except to "set 'em up" for the house.

In the mean time the inspector had risen and shaken hands with the hero of the hour.

"Hang me if I suspected who you were," he declared. "You did that well, and you are a terror on wheels."

Cibuta smiled.

"I am used to this sort of thing," he responded. "But," he asked, "I hear that your man got away from you a second time."

"Yes, so he did, and I feel pretty sore over it. I am sorry I did not heed your advice and wait for your help. You see I underrated him, and had no thought that he could trick me if I once got the drop on him."

"I told you that he is a bold and desperate character," Cibuta reminded.

"I know you did, but it is too late now to mourn over it."

"True enough, and we are all liable to make mistakes. I made a mistake when I did not arrest him when I first suspected him."

"No doubt about that. Well, what is to be the next move in the game? I must not go away from here without seeing him handed over to the authorities."

"I hardly know what move to make now," Cibuta confessed. "But, come," he added, "let's go up to the house and talk the matter over there in quiet."

"Just as you say."

They left the saloon, the sheriff acting as though nothing of an exciting nature had happened, and proceeded up the street.

There was a light in the post-office, and noticing it, Cibuta observed:

"Uncle Dan is in later than usual. By the way, how does he take hold after his four years' rest? I suppose you have been in to see him this afternoon?"

"Yes, I went in to see how he was getting along, and found that he had got everything into running shape. He is quite a character."

"Yes, so he is; he is a fine old man, and as honest as the sun. But," as they came opposite the office, and the postmaster was not to be seen, "where can he be? Let's cross over and go in. There may be something wrong."

As a general thing, the postmaster could be seen from the street when there was a light in the office.

The two men crossed over and entered the office, and the sheriff called:

"Hello! where are you, Uncle Dan?"

A groan was the startling response.

Cibuta ran around behind the counter and its case of letter-boxes, and there on the floor lay the old postmaster, bound and gagged.

The inspector was right at Cibuta's heels.

"Something out of order has been going on here," Cibuta remarked, as he made haste to get out his knife and free the old postmaster of his bonds.

"So appearances indicate," the inspector agreed.

"Who did this?" Cibuta asked when he had helped the old man to his feet.

It was some moments before the postmaster could respond, but after he had got some of the stiffness out of his jaws, he replied:

"That ragged fellow called Driftabout must have got in while I was out, for just as I came in the door he seemed to rise up through the floor, and grabbing me, he threw me down and made me fast as I was found; and then he went to the closet there, as though he was no stranger here, and taking the cloak and things with care he through the floor did disappear."

The inspector had to smile as he noted that the old postmaster's adventure had not knocked any of the rhyme out of him, but Cibuta, who was used to that, paid no attention to it.

"You say he disappeared through the floor," he repeated.

"As sure as I am standing here," the old man assured, "that was the way it did appear; to tell you false I've no intent; that was the way he came and went."

"There is more of mystery here," said Cibuta, turning to the inspector.

"So it looks," the inspector agreed; and turning to Uncle Dan he asked:

"What part of the floor was it where this took place?"

The postmaster pointed out the place about as near as he could, and they proceeded to examine the floor in that part of the office.

They had not looked long when the inspector made a discovery.

There was a little cupboard about three feet

high standing against the wall, and taking hold of it to see if it was movable the inspector found that it was on hinges and swung outward.

He swung it out, and a hole in the floor was revealed that led to the space beneath the floor and the ground.

This space was about four feet deep.

"Did you ever know that this cupboard moves in this way?" the inspector asked.

"No, sir," Uncle Dan answered, "it is a thing quite new; as strange to me as it is to you."

"It helps to account for the manner in which Moonlight Morgan tricked us so long and so successfully," observed Cibuta. "In his triple character he had us at a very great disadvantage."

"Yes, I can readily see that."

"When we would set out after Morgan, then Driftabout would soon appear in town, and in turn he would disappear and the postmaster would be at his post laughing to himself at the neat manner in which he had tricked us."

"That is the true explanation of it, beyond doubt. But, come, let's examine this hole."

As he spoke, the inspector stuck in his legs and let himself down, asking for a light when his feet were on the bottom.

A lamp was handed to him, and he disappeared and began looking around the dismal hole.

"What do you discover?" Cibuta asked.

"Why," was the response, "here is another door, at the rear of the building, showing the way he has got out and in. It is cut through the boards, and is hinged about as the cupboard is."

"He is a crafty rascal," was the comment, "but we shall have him yet, cunning as he is."

The inspector returned to the hole, handed out the lamp and got out himself, and the cupboard was put back into its place and securely nailed there.

"We will see that he does not come in the same way any more, anyhow," the inspector observed as that was being done.

Some further remarks were exchanged, and Cibuta and the inspector left the office and went on their way.

When they reached the house, Cibuta led the way into a little room that he used partly as a private office, and there they sat down to talk the matter over at leisure.

"What is your opinion regarding the fellow's probable next move?" the inspector asked.

"I believe that he will appear as Moonlight Morgan, next," was the answer; "you see he has taken pains to get hold of his disguise."

"Quite true. And how are we to trap him?"

"That remains to be seen. We do not know when or how he will appear. We are sure that he cannot elude us in the same manner as before, however."

"Then there is little that we can arrange, after all."

"On the contrary, there is much that must be arranged, now, so that we will be prepared to act promptly and at short notice."

"Well, let me hear your plans, then."

About an hour was passed in conversation, and at the end of that time the inspector set out to return to the hotel.

When he had gone Cibuta's wife entered the little room, and at sight of her husband's unique attire she could not help laughing.

"When did you turn tramp?" she asked.

"A few hours ago," was the reply. "I shall appear as my former self to-morrow, however."

"It is to be hoped that you will. But, sit down again, for I have something to tell you."

They sat down, and Nettie told him all about Azora Warrick, and her strange story.

"Where is she now?" Cibuta asked, when she had done.

"She has retired," answered Nettie.

"And you fully believe that she has told you a truthful story?"

"Yes, I believe she has."

"Very well, then, she can remain here. I know that your judgment is to be trusted in such matters."

At that moment they were startled to hear a scream, seemingly overhead, or at any rate somewhere up-stairs.

Both started to their feet, and the scream was repeated.

"It is the strange woman!" Nettie cried; and in the same instant Cibuta jerked his revolver from his pocket and flung open the door.

Up the stairs he sprang, three steps at a time, and just as he reached the top the woman met him, as she was running from her room to the head of the stairs to come down.

His appearance so startled her that, with another scream, she threw up her arms and fell to the floor in a faint.

The next moment a wild, ringing laugh was heard without, followed by the beat of hoofs, and springing over the woman's body Cibuta ran to a window at the end of the hall and looked out.

The moon was shining, and by its light the sheriff saw a horseman dashing up the valley—a horseman wearing a long, black cloak, and with plumes in his hat.

It was Moonlight Morgan, the daring outlaw.

CHAPTER X.

DUCATS DION, THE NABOB.

CIBUTA JOHN acted upon his first impulse.

That impulse was to fire after the retreating rascal, and he emptied his revolver at him.

The range was too great, however, and none of the shots took effect, though the firing aroused the town and brought the crowd immediately to the street.

But by that time the outlaw was gone, and only a few besides Cibuta had caught sight of him.

Cibuta's wife, in the mean time, was caring for the unconscious woman, and was trying to restore her to consciousness.

The lady was clad only in her night-robe, and as soon as Cibuta turned from the window he assisted his wife to carry her back to her room, where he left her in his wife's care while he hurried down to the street.

Just as he went out the door he met the post-office inspector and his man.

"What is all the shooting about," the inspector asked. "Some one has started the story that Moonlight Morgan has been seen."

"That story is true," Cibuta supported.

"The dare-devil!"

"He is nothing less. But, come, we will chase him again, and this time, perhaps we shall have better success."

The sheriff took a whistle from his pocket and blew an ear-splitting signal to his men.

In a moment that signal was similarly answered from various quarters.

"You and your man had better get your horses out," Cibuta then said, addressing the inspector, "for mine will be ready in a very few minutes."

"All right, we'll do it."

Away they ran, and ten minutes later the whole party was ready for the trail once more.

It had been quick work, considering the hour and the circumstances, and at the word from Cibuta the little cavalcade swept up the valley and disappeared from sight.

For Ante-Bar, it was old times revived.

Nothing like this had taken place in many a day, and the whole town was awake to the importance of capturing the daring outlaw.

As is generally the case, however, the great majority took it out in talking rather than in active measures. A sample of this was seen in the Pleasant Hour after the sheriff and his men had started off.

Various plans were there set forth for the easy and certain capture of the rascal, and one of the busiest of the talkers was the boasting prize-fighter, the old-time Cupid.

He had lost his grip to a great extent, by his defeat at the hands of the sheriff, and he had likewise lost somewhat of his personal beauty by having one of his eyes closed up and swelled out of all proportions; but he had not lost his ability to "blow," and he continued to do that with all vigor.

He was a much sadder, though not any wiser, man than he had been when he arrived in town, and his appearance had depreciated many per cent. His velvet suit was greatly mussed and somewhat torn, his new hat was dirty and wrinkled, and he looked, on the whole, as though he had been through the mill at high pressure.

"I tell yer, citizens," he yowled, "that sheriff o' yours ain't no good! He got away with me, that I admit; but it was more by foul tricks than by fair play. He is no good, I tell yer, an' he couldn't ketch Moonlight Morgan in a thousand years. What it wants ter git him is a man of about my caliber an' heftness."

"Bah! git out!" cried the crowd; "what Cibuta John can't do there ain't no use in anybody else tryin' ter do, an' sartainly not you."

"Is thar any galoot heur what dare come out here an' tell me that alone?" the giant challenged. "If thar is I kin poke ther words down his neck, an' don't you fergit that!"

It was evident that he was still the best man in the saloon, disabled as he was, so no one took him up.

"I tell yer that yer sheriff is no good!" he bellowed again. "He ain't ther man fer ther

place, an' I'll prove it to yer, too, afore I'm done with him. I'm goin' ter tackle him again, an' you kin bet that he won't have no easy job next time. I'll turn him inside out so quick that he won't know what's ther matter. You hear me yaup!"

"You had better go ter bed an' sleep over that," some one suggested. "Mebby you'll wake up with more sense in ther mornin'."

"Come out here an' tell me that," the fighter yelled, "an' see what'll happen! I ain't got but one workin' eye, now, but you kin bet that I'm good fer anything ye kin put up afore me. If yer don't believe it, jest come out an' try mel I'm a whole team an' a dog yet, I'm tellin' ye!"

"We know ye're a good one," another voice called out, "but you'll never see ther day that Cibuta can't tie you inter a hard knot."

"Give us a rest on Cibuta!" cried the bully. "What I was tryin' ter git at is that it will take me ter run in this outlaw fer ye. I'll do it, too, jest fer good square revenge, an' then I'll collar ther rewards that's offered. Will ye give me fair play, fellers, an' see that I git 'em?"

"That's what we will," was the response; "you capture ther outlaw, an' you shall have every cent that's put up fer him."

"That's ther stuff. I'll go fer him, an' if I don't hand him over you kin use me fer a chimney swob, that's all."

"That's ther talk, Shanghai," several voices cried; "go fer him, an' may ye have good luck!"

"Thank 's, fellers, thank 's," responded the fighter, in a more amiable tone; "an' now come up an' take another at my expense, an' drink ter my success."

There were few that did not respond, and the old-time Shanghai felt that he had recovered his lost favor in their sight.

Among those who accepted his treat was a stranger who entered the room just as the invitation was given.

He was a man of forty, evidently, and was well dressed in a business suit of black. He had a full black beard, and wore a rather fancy slouch hat.

When all had been served, and had drank, he turned to the self-styled fighter and said:

"You see I have taken advantage of your treat, stranger, and now I want to ask you and the crowd to take something at my expense. I am a stranger here, and this is about as good a way as any of introducing myself, I guess. Come right up and voice your desires, gentlemen."

Many responded, especially the regular "rounders" of the place, who felt that they were right in the swim with good fortune.

"Kin we ask who you be?" the Shanghai inquired.

"Certainly, sir," was the response; "I am Ducats Dion, and up in Washington, where I hail from, I'm called the Yakima Nabob."

Nobody present had ever heard of such a person before, but then that was nothing strange, considering the distance of his native stamping-ground from Ante-Bar.

"I am glad ter know yer," cried the old Cupid, extending his hand; "I am Jim Jones, plain Jim Jones; but I am a gentleman of ther prize ring, an' one that has stood up afore ther renowned Sullivan."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the stranger with the unique title; "I had no idea that Mr. Sullivan is out in this part of the country."

As he said this he was looking at the Shanghai's disabled eye, and as soon as the crowd "caught on" to his meaning, a bowl of laughter went up.

The fighter himself did not see the point, and he demanded:

"What be ye yowlin' at, ijitts? D'ye see anything ter laugh at? If yer do, yer see more than I kin. Don't ye know how ter receive a gentleman inter yer town?"

"Possibly it is my rather peculiar title, or nickname, that has excited ther risibility," the stranger suggested, but at the same time he was smiling in a way that proved that he had no such thought at all.

"We war laffin' at that black eye, an' ther idee ye had that it was Sullivan what made it," some one in the crowd came out flatly and explained.

"I'd Sullivan you," cried the fighter, as he glared around with his available eye, "if I knowed who you was."

In the mean time the stranger had shaken hands with the Shanghai, and followed it up by shaking hands with all who stood near.

"I believe in beginnin' right at the beginnin', when I enter a strange town," he said. "I want to be one of you—a Roman among Romans, as

it were. You will find that I am white clear through, and bound all around with inch-wide binding. I have got rocks, and plenty of them, and that's what gives me my rather odd appellation.

"Come, won't some of you take another at my expense? Don't be afraid of it, for it is stuff that never kills but once."

The "hard cases" indulged again, and then to settle the score the stranger pulled out a roll of bills as thick as his wrist and tossed one of the "L" stamp to the proprietor.

"You see I am loaded with it," he observed in a boasting way, as he displayed his money to the crowd.

When he had received his change, he turned again to the crowd, tossed a handful of silver carelessly out upon the floor, and said:

"As your town is a little out of the way of general travel, citizens, you may wonder what has brought me here, so I will rise and explain. I am taking a little run around, to see the sights and to get what excitement out of life I can, and I have just wandered down through California and across Arizona.

"From there I came on into New Mex., and at the last place I put up, I guess it's the nearest railroad point from here, I heard that there is an outlaw over here that you want captured, with a big reward offered for the job. That is just the sort of fun that I like, not that I care anything for the money, and I thought I'd run up and take a hand in the game. I suppose it's open to all comers, is it not?"

"Yes, it's free to all," answered the proprietor.

"Good enough. I'm going to try a hack at it, just for luck, and if I don't land the rascal into your jug, then you can kick me out of town."

"You are goin' ter crowd in on my claim, stranger," protested the old Shanghai.

"The deuce I am! Is that so? Well, it can't be helped, since the field is open to all, so we'll have to see who is best man at the work in hand.

"By the way, gentlemen, which is your best hotel? I have a horse outside there, and as I'm rather fagged out I guess I'll look for a bed."

He was directed to one of the two good hotels of the town, and saying a good-night to all he went out and led his horse away toward that establishment, leaving the crowd in the saloon to express freely its opinion concerning him. And the general opinion was that he was a royal good fellow.

CHAPTER XI.

"CIBUTA JOHN DOOMED!"

In the mean time, Cibuta John and his men had met with another dismal failure, or at any rate were destined to meet with one, for of course their search was not yet over.

The night advanced, the saloons closed, and gradually the town settled down to quiet and finally slept.

It was about two o'clock in the morning when the sheriff and his party returned.

Failure was, indeed, the result of the midnight sortie.

They had ridden a good many miles, not stopping to hunt for a direct trail, or clew, which would have been a loss of time under the circumstances; but had divided and subdivided their men at every junction of the road as far as they had proceeded.

At an hour agreed upon they returned, and when they all met again at the point where the first division of their force had been made, the exchange of reports showed that no one had seen anything of the outlaw.

So it was that when they rode into town they were tired and disgusted with their night's work.

Cibuta John entered the house quietly, not wanting to disturb any one, but he found his wife awake and awaiting his return.

"Did you catch him?" she inquired.

"No," was the answer, "he gave us the slip again. How is the woman? and what did she have to say when she came to?"

"She is all right, I guess, and probably asleep. She soon came to, and said that she saw a masked man trying to get in at the window from the shed, and that was what caused her to scream; and when she met you at the head of the stairs, in such a hideous rig as this, she took you for a robber."

"That explains it all, then. No doubt the fellow intended robbery, and her screams frightened him off. It was lucky that she was here. He might have given us trouble."

"Yes, that is true. I guess you have found your match in him, John."

"More than my match, it would seem," Cibuta responded. "But, I will have him yet, and my chances are better now, since he has been forced out of his hole."

Next morning the town was astir bright and early, and the events of the past twenty-four hours made up the one theme for gossip.

Old citizens recalled old times, and told about the advent of Cibuta John and the exciting times that followed, and declared that they had never expected to see anything like it again.

Cibuta John and Inspector Riggles were among the early birds, and when they met it was as with a point of interrogation—what was to be done next?

They soon heard about the stranger, Ducats Dion, and at first were inclined to think that perhaps he was their man, but when they heard more of his doings they decided that such could not be the case.

After breakfast they met again, and happened to be near the post-office when Ducats Dion came out of the hotel and crossed over in that direction.

"There is that fellow, now," said Cibuta, calling the inspector's attention to him.

"So he is; he is not our man."

"No. I guess he is going into the post-office; we will go in, too, if he does, and size him up."

"All right."

They walked on slowly, and when the man reached that side of the street, he went up the steps of the post-office and entered, and they went in right behind him.

They paid no attention to him, apparently, but proceeded to seal and stamp some letters, which, as it fortunately happened, they desired to post anyhow.

The man paid no attention to them, either, further than a glance, but stepping to the window, asked for some stamps.

"I hear that you have been having trouble here," the man observed, as he put the stamps on his letters.

"Well, yes," Uncle Dan responded, "we've had a little row, but that's about all settled now."

"It seems that the other postmaster was a rascal of the deepest dye, too. I mean to take a hand in hunting him down."

"I am glad to hear you talk that way," the old postmaster declared, "for he ought to be in jail this day."

The man looked at the old postmaster in something of surprise.

"You are a natural poet, I see," he observed. "Do you know that you answered both my remarks in rhyme?"

Uncle Dan smiled, and answered:

"They say the poet is born, not made; that's just my case, I am afraid. No matter what I want to say, it will come out in rhyme that way. It is as natural, sir, to me, as eating bread and drinking tea."

The stranger laughed, and so did Cibuta and the inspector.

The postmaster's answer was rattled off without an instant's hesitation, and its effect was better than it can be thus at second hand.

Ducats Dion turned to the sheriff and Riggles, "Your postmaster is a character, gentlemen," he observed. "He ought to be poet laureate of the nation."

"The mark of his ambition is not so high," returned Cibuta; "he does not ask anything better than the office he holds."

The man passed out, and when he was gone the inspector stepped to the window and said:

"Just let me see the letters he dropped into the box, will you, please?"

"Knowing the office that you hold," said the postmaster, "to let you see them I'll make bold; but to no other in Ante-Bar would I submit them. Here they are."

He handed the letters out as he spoke, and the post-office inspector looked at the directions on them.

"Where are they directed to?" asked Cibuta.

"To Walla Walla, Washington," the inspector answered.

He handed the letters back to Uncle Dan.

Cibuta and the inspector then went out, and as they crossed over toward the hotel, Cibuta asked:

"Well, do you think he can be our man in a perfect disguise?"

"Did we not both decide that he is not?" the inspector counter-questioned.

"Yes, I know; but we may as well settle the point for good and all. We must suspect every stranger, you know. What points do you hold that indicate his being what he sets up to be?"

"Why, he came here too soon after the ap-

pearance and disappearance of Moonlight Morgan, for one thing. Then, too, he is undoubtedly a genuine character. Your postmaster's rhyming struck him forcibly, as you saw. Then, too, he claims to be from Washington, and we have just seen him post some letters to persons at Walla Walla in that State."

"That settles it," agreed Cibuta. "I noted the same points."

"We shall have to look further for our man. Now if any stranger comes into town to-day, then I would say look after him closely."

"Strangers are coming and going all the time," said Cibuta, "and no doubt we shall see some of them before the day is done."

They had reached the hotel door, and entered.

"Good-morning, sheriff," the proprietor greeted; "here is a gentleman who desires to make your acquaintance."

The man he indicated was none other than Ducats Dion.

"Mr. Clearwell," the proprietor continued, waving his hand from Dion to the sheriff and back again as he spoke, "allow me to introduce you to Mr. Jones, sheriff of this county; better known as Cibuta John. Sheriff, Mr. Dion Clearwell, from Washington way, where he is known as Ducats Dion."

The stranger, by the way, had registered as Dion Clearwell.

He advanced to Cibuta, held out his hand, and said:

"Why, I saw you in the post-office just now, but of course had no idea who you were; I am happy to know you, sir."

Cibuta shook hands with him, responding:

"Glad to meet you, sir. You are a stranger here, I take it."

"Yes," and the man went on and told about the same story he had told on the previous night.

Cibuta passed the introduction along to the inspector, and observed:

"So, you desire to take a hand in the hunt for the outlaw, do you?"

"Yes, sir," affirmed the man, "and I thought I would see if you couldn't let me join your force—Not that either; I mean swear me in as a deputy, so that I may have some authority."

Cibuta looked at him keenly.

"You may add your weight to my force," he said, "but I cannot give you any further help. You are a stranger to me, and in picking my men I have taken only such as I have known for years."

"Well, of course you are right," the man admitted; "I was too hasty with such a request. Up my way, though, I am used to having things my own way so much that I did not think anything of it. No harm done."

"None at all," assured Cibuta. "You can see how it is. If I were to go up to your county and make the same request, it is not likely that it would be granted."

"That's so, that's so; consider it as not asked at all. Come, gentlemen, what will you take?" moving toward the bar.

"Nothing for me," answered Cibuta; "I never drink."

"You smoke, then?"

"Nor smoke, either."

"Well, you are an exception, truly. Come, Mr. Riggles, of course you will not refuse."

The inspector took a cigar, and after a little commonplace talk he and Cibuta left the hotel and went to Cibuta's office at the jail.

"What do you think of that fellow's request?" Cibuta asked, when they were comfortably seated.

"It was certainly a strange one," was the answer, "but I think I can understand and explain it."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Do so."

"Well, it is about as he said himself. He is clearly well fixed with wealth, and has been used to having his own way. The request is natural with him, and he did not think anything of it. The refusal naturally floored him."

"No doubt you are right, but he—"

There was a sudden and unlooked-for interruption. A stone crashed in at one of the windows and went rolling across the floor.

Cibuta sprang to the door and looked out to see if he could discover who had thrown it, but no one was near and he returned and picked up the stone to look at it. Around it was a piece of paper, and on that was penciled:

"CIBUTA JOHN DOOMED!"

The sheriff read the words, smiled, and handed the paper over to his companion.

"Very dramatic, isn't it?" he observed.
 "And very like business, too," added the inspector.

"Well, such things do not kill," remarked Cibuta, "and there is a good deal in that. Still, I would like to know who has favored us with this communication, for it would be some satisfaction, at least."

"Yes, it would be satisfying, truly," the inspector agreed; "and it might be valuable, too."

No explanation was forthcoming, however, and they resumed their talk.

CHAPTER XII.

UNCLE DAN GIVES A CLEW.

PRETTY but foolish Amelia Haydon had spent an almost sleepless night.

She had read over and over again, a hundred times or more, the letter she had received, and each time she read it the more it impressed her as being full of the very soul expression of a superior but much-abused man.

Of course her love blinded her, to say nothing about her not being very astute at the best of times. She fully believed that the man she loved was in the right, and of course she could show her devotion in no other way than by following his directions and doing as he requested.

Then, too, an elopement under the existing circumstances would be "just perfectly splendid!" and then, after the clouds had passed, and her husband's innocence had been established, their coming home would be an event never to be forgotten. Her father would receive them with open arms, would speak forgiveness to his wayward child, and they would live happy ever after—In about that vein she outlined it all.

The obstinate stickler in the whole matter, however, was the suggestion that she should take money from her father. That was something that had gradually grown repugnant, the more she thought of it. Finally the point was adjusted, however. She had for a long time been receiving a liberal salary for her services in the store, and had saved it all. It amounted, now, to several hundred dollars.

Taking that, she would be doing no serious wrong, and that was what she finally decided to do.

The money was all in her father's safe, in the store, but as she knew the combination it would be no trouble for her to get it.

She had heard of the excitement at the saloon, when Driftabout had made the daring break for liberty, but not for a moment would she believe that he and her lover were one.

Such a thing, she reasoned, was simply impossible. Would she not have recognized him? Of course she would.

When she made her appearance at the store on this morning, her mind was fully made up, and she had her answer to the letter written and in her pocket.

How the letter was to be sent, now that Driftabout was gone, she did not know; but she had no doubt that her lover would find some means of sending for it.

The letter she had prepared was as follows:

"MY OWN DARLING MORGAN:—

"No, indeed, I do not believe the things they say of you! I do love you, and I will help you all I can. I am ready to fly away with you whenever you are ready, and I have a large sum of money. I will go this very hour, if you say the word. Only let me know. Oh! you do not know how truly I love you! I await your reply eagerly."

"Your own little

"MELIA."

It was along in the afternoon when an old woman entered the store, a veil over her face and a stick in her hand, and she walked slowly to the counter where Haydon's fair daughter presided.

Haydon was in the store at the time, but he paid no attention to her, as he was busy.

The old woman asked to see some prints, and while Amelia was showing them to her she leaned forward and whispered:

"Don't yer give it away, miss, but I'm Driftabout. I'm here fer that answer. If ye have git got it ready jest slip it inter my hand on ther sly."

The girl was surprised, but she did not betray it, and the letter was soon in the seeming old woman's possession.

"That's all right, miss," Driftabout then said, and added:

"You go to ther post-office ter-night, after ther mail comes in, an' see if you don't git a letter there. It won't be safe fer me ter come prowlin' around any more."

"All right, I won't fail."

A trifling purchase was made, and then the

old woman went out of the store as slowly as she had entered.

"Who was that?" asked Haydon, rather sharply, being now at leisure and seeing that the old woman was a stranger to him as far as he could tell.

The girl's face flushed, and she stammeringly replied:

"I—I don't know; I—I never saw her before."

"What did she buy?"

"Only two yards off of this print."

"Umph! it is rather strange," Haydon muttered; "it is not th' usual thing fer a woman o' her years ter wear boots."

No more was said about it, and Amelia thought it soon passed out of mind.

Some time later Haydon had occasion to be out of the store a little while, and as soon as he was gone Amelia set about securing her money.

No one was present, and, opening the safe, she took the money out, made it into the smallest compass possible, and hid it upon her person. That done, she locked the safe up again and returned to her place.

When her father returned, he found her singing.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "you are cheerin' up a little, are ye? That's better than mopin' after that pizen galoot. I'm sorry I didn't kick him through th' wall th' first time that I noticed that you was lookin' eyes at him."

The girl's face flushed, and she responded:

"I can't forget him if you keep bringing his name up, father."

"Well, mebbey you're right," Haydon agreed, "so we'll say no more about it. I shall have an eye on you in th' future, though, gal."

If he could have known that her money was not in the safe it might have opened his eyes to a considerable degree.

About half an hour after the arrival of the mail that evening, when there was not much doing in the store, Amelia went out and skipped lightly down to the post-office to inquire for the expected letter.

Either she or her father went to the office every night, anyhow, so nothing could be thought of it.

"Good-evening, Uncle Dan," she greeted, as she went in; "any letters for us to-night?"

"Good-evening, 'Melia; how d'e do?" the old postmaster responded; "I have a letter here for you."

"Thanks," the girl said, as she took it, and turning away, she opened it immediately.

The old postmaster had looked at the letter closely, as he took it from the box, and in doing so a sudden light of interest appeared in his eyes. He thought he recognized the writing.

He watched the the girl as she took the letter from its envelope and read it, and noted that she seemed to exhibit signs of excitement and pleasure.

The letter was as follows:

"DEAREST LOVE:—

"I knew that you would prove true. How happy we shall be when the clouds have all passed away! It will not be long. Meet me to-morrow night at the fork of the South Trail, at midnight, and we will away. Be brave, and do not fail me. Remember that my arms are ready to receive you. Bring all the money, for we may need it; if not, then it can be sent back."

"Devotedly yours,

"MORGAN."

When she had read the letter she returned it to its envelope, thrust it into the bosom of her dress, and went out.

Just as she passed out of the office, Cibuta John entered.

"Ah!" exclaimed the postmaster, at sight of him, "Cibuta John, this pleases me; you're just the man I want to see."

"What is it, Uncle Dan?" Cibuta asked.

"I need not ask, for without doubt you know that girl who just went out," the old "poet" observed.

"Yes, of course I know her," Cibuta assured; "she is Steve Haydon's daughter, Amelia."

"Well, she just got a letter here that isn't all correct, I fear, for the writing on it much agreed with the hand of Morgan Underweed; and he, as you most likely know, has been of late, on the sly, her beau. The letter was left here to-day, but who put it in I cannot say. I thought I'd mention this to you, for maybe it will prove a clew."

"This is highly important, Uncle Dan," the sheriff declared, "and I will not fail to make use of the information. I am greatly obliged to you."

The postmaster was about to say something more, but just then a woman's scream was heard, and Cibuta John hastened out.

As he reached the open air the cry was repeated, and it seemed to come from the direction of his house, or at any rate up the street on that side.

He started on a run in that direction.

The cry had come from Amelia Haydon.

When she left the office and started on her return to the store, she had no thought of danger, for she had been over the same ground hundreds of times, day and night, and no one had ever molested her.

Just as she was passing the sheriff's house, or rather the yard—for the house was set well back, she came face to face with Jim Jones, the old-time Cupid.

He had been drinking pretty freely all day, and was well along on the road to being drunk.

Amelia turned out to give him plenty of room, but when he caught sight of her pretty face he stopped short and exclaimed:

"Ah, there, little tulip: let's have er kiss!"

The frightened girl started to run, but the giant sprang after her and caught her, and then it was that she screamed.

"No, yer don't," the rascal cried, handling her as easily as though she had been but a doll; "yer don't run off in that style. I'll have ther kiss now, or bu'st. Stop yer yawpin', will ye?"

The girl had screamed again, and several times, and the bully clapped his hand over her mouth to keep her still while he proceeded to steal the kiss he had demanded.

The door of the sheriff's house opened, and some one came running out to the scene, and rapid steps were heard coming up the street at the same time.

In a few seconds Cibuta John was on hand, but by that time the girl had fainted, and when the giant let go of her she fell to the ground in a heap.

"What are you up to here, you drunken brute?" Cibuta demanded, and catching hold of the fighter he slammed him down, kicked him into the gutter, and then grabbing hold of his foot dragged him out into the road and deposited him in a puddle.

The person who had come from the house was Nettie, and finding that the girl had fainted, she directed Cibuta to carry her into the house. This was immediately done, and when the crowd arrived upon the scene they found only the old Shanghai wallowing in the puddle in the middle of the road.

CHAPTER XIII.

HANGED IN EFFIGY.

ANOTHER scene of wild excitement followed.

The crowd recognized at once the work of the sheriff, and greeted the fallen chieftain with shouts of derision.

"Ther lightnin' has struck twice in ther same place!" cried one.

"Been takin' another fall out of ther cyclone, have yer," taunted another.

"What yer doin' there?" others called out;

"be ye larnin' ter swim?"

"Why don't yer crow?"

"Ther fallen angel!"

"A dismounted Cupid!"

All these cries and a hundred more were uttered, and amid them all the big braggart got out of his bath and began to bellow for Cibuta to come out and give him a fair chance at him.

Of course no attention was paid to him by the sheriff, and after a little while he went off with the crowd to one of the saloons, a good place for him.

In the mean time the sheriff's wife was trying to bring the girl to her senses.

She had commenced this as soon as the girl was brought in, assisted by the strange woman, Azora Warrick.

As soon as he had laid the girl down on the lounge in the sitting-room, Cibuta hearing the noise without, turned back to secure the door.

That done, he returned to the room.

"What happened to the poor child?" Azora was just asking.

"A big brute of a fellow frightened her nearly to death," Nettie answered.

"He deserved to be shot!"

"John paid him well for his insolence," the proud wife assured.

"I am glad of it."

"Hold on, Nettie," Cibuta here broke in; "before you bring her to just see if she hasn't a letter in her pocket. If she has, I want to see it. I believe she has received one from Morgan Underweed."

Nettie felt in the girl's pocket, but there was no letter there.

"I know she has one," Cibuta persisted;

"just search her well and see if you can find it."

The next natural place to look suggested itself to the woman's mind, and bending over the senseless form she felt in the bosom of her dress.

From there she drew out two letters, a flat package, and a photograph.

Cibuta took them and hurriedly read the letters.

"Good!" he exclaimed, when he had done so. "Now, Mr. Moonlight Morgan, you are my whipperwill!"

"Whose photograph is it?" Nettie asked.

"The ex-postmaster's," Cibuta answered.

"May I see it, sir?" asked Azora Warrick.

"Certainly," and he passed it over to her.

The woman took it, and the moment she glanced at the face it pictured she uttered a cry.

"This is Hudson Haverstraw!" she exclaimed.

"Is it possible?" echoed Nettie.

"It is true," cried the woman. "I would know his face among ten thousand."

"Well, you will soon have the satisfaction of seeing him in his proper place, the jail," promised Cibuta.

"His proper place is further than that," said the woman; "he deserves to be hanged."

"If his career is not cut short, it will come to that," assured the sheriff.

"Shall we proceed in trying to restore Amelia, now?" Nettie asked.

"Before you do so," Cibuta directed, "replace these things just where you discovered them, and when the girl comes to do not let her think that they have been seen. If she finds they have been, it may upset all my plans."

"All right, John, it shall be as you say," Nettie promised.

She returned the letters, the package, and the photograph to the bosom of the girl's dress, and then she and Azora proceeded in their work of restoring her.

In two or three minutes the girl opened her eyes and looked around her, and as soon as the recollection of what had happened came upon her she looked startled and asked:

"Where is he?"

"He is gone," answered Nettie, "and you are safe. You are more frightened than hurt."

"I thought I should die!"

So the girl gasped, and with assistance she sat up.

Suddenly she remembered the letters and the money in her bosom, and clapped her hand to her dress to see if they were still there and safe.

Finding that they were, she was more easy in mind.

"How long have I been here?" she asked.

"Only just a few moments," Cibuta quickly answered.

"How did you bring me to?" turning to Nettie.

"By rubbing your hands and face," was the reply.

The girl recovered her strength very soon, and getting upon her feet declared that she must hasten on to the store.

"Shall I go with you?" Cibuta asked.

"No," was the answer, "it won't be necessary, if the fellow is gone."

"Yes, he is gone; he went off down the road."

"Then I will go."

Only a few other remarks were exchanged, and Amelia set out, Cibuta and his wife and Azora standing on the porch till they saw her enter the store.

"To-morrow night," observed Cibuta, as they turned back into the house, "the outlaw shall be my prisoner," and he explained his plans.

When Amelia entered the store, her father met her with the demand:

"Was that you that yelled so, gal?"

"Yes," Amelia answered; and she told what had happened.

"It will larn ye ter stay in," was the gruff comment. "I will do th' goin' to ther office myself, after this."

Later on, when the girl had retired to her room, she made sure that her money was safe and then set about writing a note of farewell to her father.

Only one day more for her at Ante-Bar, and then for a life of happiness with the man she loved!

When morning dawned once more, the citizens of the town had another surprise awaiting them.

In the open space in front of the jail was a tree, and to one of the limbs of that tree hung a stuffed figure, on the breast of which, in big letters, was the name—

"CIBUTA JOHN."

On the door of the jail, too, was a notice which read as follows:

"NOTICE!"

"Citizens of Ante-Bar, behold your sheriff! You will soon see him in just about that graceful position. All he is good for is to stretch hemp. He has been a year trying to catch Moonlight Morgan, and is no nearer to doing it now than he was when he started. It is time you had a change, so the office will soon be vacant. This is the last you will see or hear of me, so I'll say good-by to all."

"MOONLIGHT MORGAN."

The whole town turned out to see the sight, and it was not long when some inventive genius in the crowd suggested that the effigy be taken down and another name put on it.

This idea took hold immediately, and soon it was accomplished. When the figure was hoisted to its place again the name it bore was:

"MOONLIGHT MORGAN."

One group in the crowd was made up of Cibuta John, Inspector Riggles, his man Samuels, Ducats Dion and others.

"That is rather a sweeping insult at you, Mr. Jones," Ducats Dion observed, addressing Cibuta.

"Yes, rather," the sheriff admitted; "but let him have his fling, for my turn will come some time."

"The fellow says he is going away, though."

"It will be a good thing if he does, but I do not believe it. You see he has as good as vowed to hang me before he goes."

"Yes, that's so."

"Perhaps we shall take a hand in that game, when he begins it," remarked the inspector, "and he may find himself at the wrong end of the rope when the pulling-up begins."

"I would like to have a hand in the fun," Ducats Dion declared. "By the way, sheriff, have you got hold of any clew yet?" he asked.

Cibuta looked at him sharply, as he had done on one other occasion, and made answer:

"No, nothing positive; we must wait for him to move."

While they were talking, the old-time Cupid worked his way through the crowd to where they stood.

He was a hideous-looking object.

Almost all of one side of his face was black and blue, and one eye was closed in entirely out of sight. The beauty of his velvet suit was gone forever. The stains of mud were all over it, and it was shrunk all out of shape and proportion.

The old Shanghai was sober, however, and in his one available eye burned the fires of revenge. Cibuta saw him, but paid no attention to him.

As soon as the giant came opposite to where the sheriff was standing, however, and not more than five feet away, he suddenly threw himself into fighting attitude and cried out:

"Now you have got ter suffer, Cibuta John! Now I've got ye, fair an' square, right here afore ther bull crowd, an' I'm goin' ter pay ye up fer all. Put up yer paws, or I'll lam ye."

Cibuta stepped back with an exclamation of disgust.

"Go away, you blattering idiot!" he cried.

"Yes, I'll go away after I've knocked ye out, an' not afore," was the yell. "I tell ye I'm goin' ter lick yer, an' you had better put up. If ye don't, I'll make ye. You had me foul last night, but now I'll make yer wish ye had never been born."

"If ye don't shut up and go away, I will have you locked up," Cibuta cautioned. "I am in no humor to fool with you."

In retort to that the giant threw back his head and crowed, and then he spit squarely into the sheriff's face.

There was a melee immediately.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEATH-CALL SOUNDED.

No sooner was the insult given than the crowd fell back.

They knew what the result would be, and made room for action.

The oldest citizens who witnessed it could not recall a time when they had seen Cibuta so quickly and so thoroughly enraged.

With a growl like that of a tiger, he jumped forward and dealt a blow at the cowardly giant's head which, had it struck its mark, would have almost killed the fellow.

The giant warded it, however, and sending one back with lightning quickness, Cibuta just escaped it and no more.

Then the fight was in deadly earnest.

It was not to be denied that the giant was ac-

complished in the "art" of fisticuffs, and the fight was hard and bitter.

Cibuta was out of practice, having had no more than an occasional bout with some brawling blowhard, and that only when it was forced upon him, and had no advantage other than that which has been mentioned, namely, a splendid physique.

It was this that stood him in good turn now.

Enraged as he was, he forced the fight at his hardest, the giant doing the same, but for some time no telling blows were got in on either side.

At the end of two or three minutes, however, the giant was breathing hard, and he soon sprung back to get his wind.

But Cibuta showed him no quarter, and he was forced to continue fighting.

In another minute the giant's blows were weak, and then his punishment began. Cibuta put it to him on every side, first with one hand and then with the other, the blows cracking and thudding so that they were heard all over the square.

This could not last long, and finally the bully began to bellow for mercy, when, with a final blow as a finisher, Cibuta sent him spinning end over end far out into the crowd.

Hats were instantly snatched off and tossed high up in the air, and a ringing cheer for Cibuta John was given.

The sheriff was panting some, too, by this time, but he was in fair condition yet, and responded to the cheer.

"I hope that will settle his case for good and all," he observed. "I did not want to do it, but I could not stand being spit upon."

"You are a terror!" exclaimed Ducats Dion, in admiration. "I consider myself handy with my fists, but I have no desire to tackle you."

"I would like to see you meet Sullivan, sir," remarked the inspector.

"Nonsense!" Cibuta cried; "he would knock me out so quick that I could not remember what my name was. Besides, I do not set up as a fighter, and do not like to fight. I do it only when it is forced upon me."

By this time the old Cupid was up, and he came staggering forward, the blood running through his fingers as he held his hand to his face, and when he had reached the spot where Cibuta was standing, he said:

"Cibuta John, sheriff, I give it up. You be th' best man, an' there's no use o' my kickin'. I'm satersfied now, clear up ter th' neck. I don't want no more."

"I am glad to hear you say so," responded Cibuta, "for I can't do any more for you unless I kill you outright."

Those of Ante-Bar's citizens who loved excitement were having their fill of it now.

This reminded them of the old red-hot times the town had experienced, and work was almost at a standstill.

And so the day passed, but without anything further to add to the fever.

With the evening, however, came another thunderbolt.

The mail was somewhat later than usual in arriving, and an eager crowd was at the post-office.

Finally, when it was about an hour late, the carrier dashed into the valley, hatless, and without the pouch.

"Where's ther mail?" was the question on every hand.

"I've been robbed," the carrier answered, when he drew rein at the office door.

"Robbed! Who robbed ye?"

"Moonlight Morgan."

"Ther deuce yer say!"

"Yes," the carrier proceeded to explain, "he met us not half a mile out o' town, afoot, an' went through us in good style. Frank tried ter draw on him, but Moonlight shot him afore he could do it."

"Frank Denton dead?"

"Just so. He had a big boodle with him, too."

The man mentioned was an Express-messenger, who carried valuables between the town and the railroad. He and the mail-carrier generally joined forces when the messenger was on the road.

Cibuta John soon came to the front, and proceeded to get at the bottom of the case.

"Where did this take place?" he asked.

"A quarter of a mile the other side of Big Bend," was the answer.

"Was Moonlight Morgan alone?"

"Yes."

"And in his usual disguise?"

"Yes, just the same, except that he was afoot."

"How did you get away from him?"

"He told me to ride on, when he was done with me."

"And which way did he go?"

"I did not see; he was standin' there by poor Frank yet, when I started."

Other questions were asked, too, but these quoted seemed to give the sheriff all the information he really cared for, and he went off at once to take action in the serious matter.

His first work was to get together four of his deputies, and send them out after the body.

They were soon off, and then he set about arranging other matters.

Calling his remaining men into his office at the jail, he had a secret conference with them, and when they came out each man went his way to attend to the duty that had been assigned to him.

When the conference was over, Inspector Riggles called at the office, before Cibuta could go away, and offered the service of himself and man.

The inspector had realized that he was out of his element away out there in the wilds, and had come to look upon Cibuta as his leader.

"I do not know where I can use you, now that my arrangements are all laid," said Cibuta, honestly.

"Use us anywhere," was the request. "All we ask is to have a hand in the capture of this rascal."

"You have no clew, then, and no suspicion, eh?" Cibuta asked.

"None whatever."

"And are at loss how to proceed?"

"Exactly."

"Well, then, unless I am muchly mistaken I have a surprise in store for you. You may go and report to my lieutenant—as I call him, tell him I sent you, and join him."

"I would prefer to go with you yourself."

"Yes, I know; but that is impossible. In the work that I have laid out for myself I must act alone."

"Well, then, we will do the next best thing. We will go with your men. I freely own that I am at loss how to act against such a fellow, here in his native jungle as it were. Besides, you have the best claim to him, now."

"Yes, his other offenses are trifling compared with his latest crime."

The inspector went out, and he had been gone but a little while when Ducats Dion came into the office.

"Well, things have taken a serious turn now," he remarked.

"A very serious turn," Cibuta agreed.

"I suppose you will now redouble your efforts to capture the fellow."

"I cannot do that," was the confession, "for I have been doing my best right along. I shall put forth every effort, of course."

"I am going to try it myself, too," the nabob sport announced. "I am going to set out from here to-night and invite him to stop me on the road. If he does, it will be one or the other of us. I am not afraid of him."

"You run a big risk," Cibuta warned.

"I know that, but I am used to that sort of thing, as people up in Washington could tell you. By the way, how would you like to make a little bet?"

"What sort of a bet?"

"I'll lay you a hundred that I land the fellow in this jail before morning."

"To make it interesting, I take the bet," Cibuta announced. "Who shall hold the stakes?"

"Oh, you needn't mind putting up the cash, unless you want me to do so. I am not afraid to trust your word, sheriff."

"Very well, so be it. You intend going it alone, then?"

"Yes, entirely alone."

"Well, I wish you luck, but I am afraid."

The nabob laughed, and a few more remarks being exchanged, he went out.

Cibuta John rose and paced the floor. He was in a thoughtful mood. Events were shaping themselves so that he was hardly sure of his ground.

Where his suspicion had been directed, the ground seemed to be breaking away from under the foundation he had erected.

In a little while one of his men came in to make a report.

"Well, what is the word?" Cibuta asked.

"I think your suspicion is correct," was the answer.

"Why do you think so?"

The man explained.

"Well, you must be right," Cibuta commented, "and now I think I see into it all. We shall soon know, however. Go back, and do not let

him escape your eye if you can help it, but do not let him know that you are watching him."

"All right."

The man went away again, and a little time later the beat of hoofs was heard as the four men rode into town with the body of the murdered messenger.

They rode up to the court-house, and the body was carried into the ante-room, where the inquest was to be held, and Cibuta put out the light in his office and prepared to go over.

The jail set well back, and somewhat in the shadow, and just as the sheriff opened the door and stepped out a powerful arm was thrown around him and a voice hissed in his ear:

"Cibuta John, you must die!"

At the same instant a knife flashed before his eyes, the blade descended and struck his breast with full force, and as he reeled and fell he saw a man in a long, black cloak speeding rapidly away. He drew his revolver and fired after him, but his shot was wild, and he went on and emptied the weapon, in order to bring assistance.

CHAPTER XV.

EVENTS CROWDING TO THE CLOSE.

THE rapid firing brought men running to the spot, and they found their sheriff lying on the ground, the blood flowing from his wound.

"Heavens!" was the exclamation, "Cibuta has been killed!"

They shouted for more help, which was unnecessary, as a crowd was rapidly collecting, and then stooped to examine the hurt.

"Don't do anything here," Cibuta faintly requested; "carry me right home and get the doctor there at once."

To order was to be obeyed with him, for he was loved by his fellow-citizens, and the men took him tenderly up and carried him to his house.

The news flew like wildfire, and the murder of Frank Denton was almost forgotten in the face of this new calamity.

A great crowd followed the men who carried the wounded man, and at Cibuta's request one man ran on ahead to prepare his wife for the shock.

When they arrived at the house the doctor was already there, men having gone for him with all haste, and Cibuta was carried in and the door closed between him and the crowd.

In a moment one man dashed out and started away on a run, returning in a very short time with the sheriff's lieutenant.

They entered, and for about five minutes nothing more took place that could give those without any information.

At the end of that time the lieutenant came out, and a cry immediately went up to know how Cibuta was.

"He is dying," was the sad response.

A silence fell over the crowd immediately, a silence as great as though every man had been turned into stone.

No greater blow could have been given.

The silence lasted for a moment, and then was heard the sound of strong men weeping, and slowly the crowd went out of the yard and away, realizing that their presence there could do no good.

They followed the lieutenant, and when they were some distance from the house they stopped him.

"Lieutenant," a volunteer spokesman asked, "did he say who it was struck ther blow?"

"Yes," was the response, "he believes it was Moonlight Morgan. He was taken at such a disadvantage, and so unexpectedly, that he could not resist, and the fellow got away after doing his deadly work. Cibuta saw him, and says that he was clad in a long, black cloak."

"Boyees, what is yer say?" one old citizen called out. "Shell we turn out an' scour ther country?"

"Yes, yes!" was the eager response.

"Hold on!" exclaimed the lieutenant, "hear what I have to say. 'I know you will respect Cibuta's wishes in this matter.'"

"Yes, that we will."

"Well, he desires you citizens to go right on with the inquest over Frank Denton, and leave me and my men to handle this other affair."

"Did he give them orders?" was the demand.

"Yes," the lieutenant assured, "such are his directions."

"Then they shall be observed."

The crowd broke, the majority going to the court-house while the rest returned to the vicinity of the sheriff's residence, where they waited patiently to hear the sad report that was looked for at any moment.

They had not long to wait.

In a little time the doctor came out, and when asked the all-important question he sadly uttered the one word:

"Dead."

A dismal but suppressed groan followed the announcement, and the crowd immediately dispersed to spread the sad news.

In a little time the sheriff's house was darkened, and an impressive and respectful silence reigned in the vicinity.

Ante-Bar was in mourning.

In the mean time the lieutenant had gone to the court-house, had announced the sheriff's wishes, and the coroner had drawn his jury and begun the inquest.

Virtually, Cibuta John had been little less than absolute sovereign of the county, and the recognized head in every thing.

The inquest was not a lengthy one.

There was only one witness whose testimony was important, and that one was the mail-carrier.

He told his story plainly and simply, and the evidence of the men who had gone out to bring the body in, supported it as far as could be looked for.

The verdict was rendered immediately; that Frank Denton had come to his death at the hands of the outlaw known as Moonlight Morgan.

As soon as the verdict had been announced the deputy sheriff, Cibuta's lieutenant, reminded the people again of Cibuta's wishes that the capture of the outlaw should be left entirely to him and his men, and the lieutenant being well-known, the request was respected, though it was plain that the population would have preferred to turn out *en masse* to scour the country.

About that time the word reached the court-house that the sheriff was dead, and a meeting was immediately called by some of the leading spirits of the town, and it was voted that all business in the town, as far as possible, should be immediately suspended.

Within an hour the whole place was dark and almost silent.

It was close upon midnight when a veiled woman crept stealthily around from the rear of Steve Haydon's store, stopped as she came out to the street to make sure that she was not seen, and then proceeded hurriedly up the valley and out of the town.

The reader will readily infer that this was Amelia Haydon.

As soon as she was clear of the town the woman increased her pace to a run, and in a brief time was at the place where the trails divided.

Taking the one bending toward the south, she sped on, but naturally could not long continue her running.

When she stopped running, however, her walk was still brisk, and a man who followed cautiously after her found it hard to keep near her without letting his presence become known.

The woman's pace gradually slackened, however, and the man drew nearer to her, walking as silently as a shadow.

It was about a mile to the fork of the South Trail, the place where Morgan Underwood had directed Amelia to meet him, measuring from the head of the valley; but the woman was not long in making the distance.

When she approached the fork she walked still slower, and the man who had followed her used the utmost caution as he drew near, keeping close in the deep shadows of the rocks and trees.

Finally the woman stopped and looked about her.

She was right at the fork of the trail, and the moonlight fell upon her as it cut its way through a break in the trees.

Her veil still covered her face, but any one knowing Amelia would have been sure that it was she.

The girl's wardrobe was not so extensive that her attire was not to be recognized. The man who had followed her saw that she was clad in her every-day store costume.

For some minutes silence reigned, and the girl stood and patiently waited.

Presently the silence was broken by the whispered name:

"Amelia!"

The girl started and looked around. No one was to be seen.

After a few seconds' silence the name was repeated.

"Here I am," the girl answered, using the same guarded tone.

"I will join you immediately," spoke the other voice then. "I did not want to come upon you unawares, for I am in disguise. Do not be so foolish as to scream when you see me."

"All right, I won't," the girl assured. A step was heard then, just around the bend of the trail, and a man came into view.

Amelia almost forgot her promise, though she had recognized the voice of the ex-postmaster, for the man who presented himself was not of attractive appearance.

He looked like the very "hardest" of hard-looking Western roughs, and over his face was a mask.

"Don't be frightened," he reassured; "it is I. Of course it is necessary for me to be in disguise with the suspicion that I am Morgan the outlaw upon me. Are you ready to go?"

"Yes, Morgan, I am ready," was the assurance.

"And you have got the money with you?"

Neither saw the form that was preparing to spring down upon them from a rock just above and to the right of where they stood, nor the other form that was creeping stealthily upon them from behind the girl.

"Yes, I have got the money," the girl assured.

"Then, little fool, give it to me this instant," was the startling demand, "for I am indeed Moonlight Morgan, and this ruse was but to get hold of your father's boodle."

The girl fell back with a half-uttered cry, and dropped to the road in a dead faint, and in the same instant another form sprung forward and took her place.

It was the form of the man who had been following her, and a ready revolver was in his hand.

The man on the rock above, just on the point of springing down, checked himself and looked on in surprise.

The outlaw started back a step, and his hand flew behind him.

"Hold! Hudson Haverstraw!" cried a woman's voice.

It was Azora Warrick in male attire!

"You!" the villain gasped, as for an instant he paused.

"Yes, I," was the response; "and your time has come. Die, like the coward, thief, and murderer that you are!"

As she spoke the final word she fired, but her bullet was harmless. The man had dropped down, and as soon as the weapon had spit out its spiteful charge of lead and fire he was up again, a revolver in his own hand.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, "not yet, little tiger," and with the words he made a leap forward to seize her.

Another second and she would have been in his murderous hands.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EXPECTED END.

THE failure of her shot so dismayed the woman that she stood as though she had no power to move. She might have fired again, perhaps, had she been an expert in the use of the weapon she held, but she was not.

But help was at hand, for, as the villain leaped forward to seize her, down sprung a man from the rock above, landing upon the outlaw and bearing him to the ground.

There was a brief struggle, a slight clicking sound was heard, and one of the men rose to his feet leaving the other upon the earth with handcuffs upon his wrists.

The man who arose was—*Cibuta John!* and Moonlight Morgan at last was in his grip.

He had disarmed his prisoner, and lifting his hat to the woman who stood before him in male attire, he said:

"Miss Warrick, you have just escaped what might have proved your death. You were foolish to take such a risk."

Seeing that she was safe, the woman's courage returned.

"I thank you for saving me, sir," she said. "I hoped to gain, in this way, the revenge I have been seeking so long. I had no idea that he could escape my weapon at such close range."

"Your revenge will be complete when you know that he has been hanged," the sheriff observed. "Please see if you can restore that girl to consciousness," he added; and then called:

"Come forward, men!"

In a few brief moments a dozen men were upon the spot.

They sprung down the rocks, dropped out of the trees, and seemed to rise out of the very ground.

The daring outlaw had walked into a trap of his own making, and from which there could have been no escape.

Laying hold upon the fellow, they jerked him to his feet, and Cibuta snatched the mask from his face.

An exclamation of surprise escaped from every one present except Cibuta himself.

It was not the face of the ex-postmaster and outlaw that was revealed, but that of the stranger sport—*Ducats Dion*.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the inspector, who had made one of the ambushing party.

"It is the fact," responded Cibuta, "as you can see. I suspected him from the first, but did not want to breathe my suspicion for fear he might learn of it."

"Yes, it is the fact," spoke up the prisoner; "and now that the game is up, I hope you are satisfied. I gave you a long hunt."

"And now a rope awaits you," Cibuta reminded, sternly.

Azora Warrick had by this time succeeded in restoring Amelia Haydon to consciousness, and as soon as the girl was able to walk the sheriff ordered a return to the town.

It was about one o'clock in the morning when they filed into Ante-Bar, and the town was dark and silent.

Dogs soon began to bark here and there, however, and Cibuta directed his men to startle the natives by making all the noise they could.

They began to shoot off their revolvers and to yell with all the power of their lungs, and it seemed as though an invading host had entered the valley.

"Come! hustle out here! you sleepy galoots!" they yelled; "here is the great and only greatest show on earth, right at your doors! Git into yer boots, you lazy vipers! and come out here and help us howl! We've got that pizen sinner, Moonlight Morgan, dead ter rights this time! Come! hustle out here, everybody!"

A thousand such cries, it seemed, made night hideous, and the citizens soon came tumbling into the street to learn what all the noise was about.

The big moon was overhead and it was almost as light as day.

Judge of the surprise when the people of Ante-Bar beheld their sheriff alive and well! Their lungs could not give sufficient expression to their joy. Drums, horns, tin pans—anything and everything that could be used to make a noise was brought into requisition, and for a quarter of an hour the uproar was deafening.

Any one approaching the town, then would have thought that Ante-Bar had gone suddenly, mysteriously and violently crazy.

When the serenade began to subside a little, then Cibuta was called upon to make a speech, and a big box was brought from the porch of Bob Burdock's store for him to stand on.

Cibuta mounted the box at once, and when the crowd had become quiet, said:

"Fellow-citizens, I suppose you want me to tell you, first of all how I came to life again. I will do so. When this rascal stabbed me I was partly stunned for the moment, but was not seriously hurt. That charm which you all know I wear caught the point of the dagger and turned it aside, so that it inflicted only a flesh-wound. The thought came to me at once that it might serve me well to let the rascal think he had killed me, so I made out that I was badly hurt, and later the report was sent out that I was dead. Really, as soon as the doctor had dressed the wound, I went out the back way, and set out to capture him. You see it is all easily explained."

"Knowing that the fellow was to be at the fork of the South Trail at midnight, I went there with my men, and you see the result."

The speech went on to some length, as the sheriff set forth all the particulars of the affair, but it is not necessary to quote it, as all the material facts are known to the reader.

In the mean time Amelia Haydon had quietly regained the house, and Azora Warrick had sought her room and changed her attire.

No one had known of the part she intended to play.

Getting her points at the same time and in the same manner in which Cibuta John had gained them, from the letters found upon Amelia Haydon, she had then and there resolved that she would follow the girl and shoot the rascal at sight.

When Cibuta's speech ended the prisoner was taken to the jail, though there was a great cry that he ought to be hanged without delay; and a guard was put over him so that escape was next to impossible.

But, the town did not again settle down to quiet, but kept up its jubilee for the rest of the night, in honor of the capture.

Next day the outlaw made a confession of his

misdeeds, and it was seen that his whole career had been one of rascality and evil-doing.

His true name, he stated, was plain Hiram Brown. He owned that he was the "Hudson Haverstraw" who had married and deserted the sister of Azora Warrick, Kate Delmonte; Azora's real name being Sarah Delmonte. It had been his intention to make good his escape as soon as he had secured the wealth of Steve Haydon, which he fully believed Amelia would bring to him. That, he thought, added to what he had, would make him rich for life.

As all his plunder was found upon him when he was taken, it required no further search to get hold of that.

He it was who had played the role of Drift-about. When pursued, he would return to town by a secret path, change his attire in a cave he had discovered, and come boldly into town. Then, when opportunity offered, he would assume his proper character.

On the occasion of his escape from the post-office inspector, by jumping out of the window of the saloon, he had simply dodged around the corner, run to the front and crossed the street, and so made his escape in a direction unexpected.

He it was, too, who had thrown the stone in at the window of the jail at the time when Cibuta and the inspector were there together, and also he had hanged the stuffed figure to the tree in the court-house yard.

All the other little points were as easily and simply explained. The letters he had mailed to Walla Walla were simply a blind.

In due time he was tried, convicted and hanged.

Azora Warrick, as she was still known, had in the mean time received her money from the East, and remained until after the trial and execution, when she set out to return to New York.

In the characters of "Moonlight Morgan" and "Ducats Dion" the villain had stolen the titles he had adopted. These men were of the far Northwest, and it may be our pleasure, at some future time, to chronicle some of their adventures.

Certain it is that neither of them would have been proud of their thieving and self-appointed namesake.

Jim Jones, the old-time Cupid, drifted out of the place, and has not been seen there since. Cibuta John had pretty effectually cured the bully of any desire to run the town.

Inspector Riggles and his man returned East, where they were able to report that the difficulty at Ante-Bar had been thoroughly settled. In justice to the inspector, it must be said that he put the honor where it belonged, taking little credit to himself. To him Cibuta John was the "noblest Roman of them all."

THE END.

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers,
98 William Street, New York.